

THE ARGOSY.

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COLONEL FANE'S SECRET.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

ON THE SUMMIT OF THE LAUBERHORN.

SOME seven thousand feet above the valley of Lauterbrunnen there rises one of the lesser mountain summits which is but seldom visited. It is called the Lauberhorn. Scores of tourists pass it by on their way over the Wengern Alp. Perhaps not one in a thousand stops to ascend it, or is even aware of its existence, and yet the view from the summit is sublime. You look down on the Lauterbrunnen valley to the westward as on a map. The Staubbach fall, itself close upon a thousand feet in height, seems but a tiny cascade. Murren looks almost level with the valley, the river is but a silken thread winding downward towards Interlaken. Facing southward a range of unspeakable grandeur is before you. The spotless Jungfrau, the white-robed Monch and the stupendous Eiger—three giants whose robes are shining glaciers, whose helmets are the sunlit clouds. Over the ridge of the Scheideck rises the sharp pinnacle of the Wetterhorn. Softened in distance lie innumerable peaks like waves of frozen foam. Pine forest and pastures lie at your feet, streamlets in myriads glance and glisten in the sun. The soul is hushed with wonderment and awe as we gaze. The might of nature overwhelms us. We can only marvel and worship.

It was in the later weeks of June that two figures were seated on the rocks which crown this summit—two familiar friends, Bates and Vera Fane. They had climbed the slopes of grass and rock which lay between them and the Jungfrau Hotel, which stands, or did stand at the time of this story, not far from the summit of the Little Scheideck. The demon Steam is so invading the valleys and mountains of Switzerland that one cannot tell from year to year that the old landmarks will be the same. A few years ago the highest

enjoyment was to be had in the early walk up through the deliciously fragrant pine woods, with all one's impedimenta on one's back strapped in a small knapsack. Now the funicular railway and puffing locomotive convey their thousands to the heights sublime, and repose must be sought elsewhere.

Bates and his companion were alone on the summit. The climb from the hotel had not been difficult; a child might accomplish it in less than an hour, but the scene which met their eyes had filled Vera with amazement. It was her first view of the mountains from such an elevation. They, together with Mrs. Meredith and Frank, had arrived at Interlaken only the day before, and had pushed on as far as the Wengern Alp at the earliest possible moment. They had lunched at the hotel, and Frank, who had insisted on walking up from Lauterbrunnen with his uncle—deeming it more manly than to mount a mule like his mother—had fallen fast asleep. It therefore fell out that Bates and Vera set out for an afternoon ramble alone, and Bates, to whom the ground was familiar, guided her to this spot.

The two had changed places with regard to health in the interval which had elapsed since the memorable night of the fire. Bates had regained his former robust aspect. His cheek was bronzed, his limbs were firmly knit. The scar upon his cheek was still there, but it hardly disfigured him now; but Vera was sadly altered. The freshness of youth seemed to have passed away entirely. The look of a worn and anxious woman had taken its place. She seemed ten years older than she did only a short year ago.

Bates was only too conscious of the fact, and had projected this trip in the hope of bringing back the roses to her cheeks, and to give time for the restorations at Halton. She had been his devoted nurse all through his state of weakness and his convalescence. She read to him by the hour in the daytime, played and sang to him in the quiet evening hours, waded through heavy reports of scientific meetings, wrote his letters, attended to his every want. Possibly the thought that she had been forced, as it were, to practise deceit towards one so good, one who loved her so much, prompted her to still deeper devotion. She little dreamed how much he knew, and what deep compassion he felt for her. In the last few months, at least, she had no cause to reproach herself. Her life had been as pure and unblemished as the snows on which they gazed.

"You led me to expect much," she said, as she sat with her hand in his; "but I never dreamed it could be so wonderful as this. How can anyone live through life without caring to see it?"

"Too often it is because they don't know, and too often, I fear, because they have not the souls to appreciate it."

"But this must stir the dullest heart. How truly wonderful it is! It is almost more than I can bear!" And at that moment, indeed, her eyes filled with tears.

"Come, come, dearest," said Bates. "You must not let it move

you too much; though, indeed, you are not the only one I have seen overcome by the first sight of a snow mountain. You will get accustomed to it by-and-by. You have still greater wonders to see."

"I cannot conceive anything more wonderful than this; it is so far, far beyond my anticipations. How exquisitely soft that white summit is against the delicious blue!"

"The Jungfrau. Twenty years ago I was standing on its summit, and now they are talking of a railway to the top—the demons!"

"It seems almost desecration to ascend them, even on foot," said Vera. "One likes to think them absolutely untrodden from the beginning of the world—absolutely beyond the reach of man and all his works."

"I might think so now, but the intense desire to conquer them was strong upon me in those days. I was in the flush of youth then, you know."

"You mean to imply that you are too old now," said Vera, with a smile. "Why, to see you sometimes—to see you playing with Frank, for instance—one would think you still a boy of sixteen."

"I may feel so, but I cannot deny the weight of forty years. Besides," he said, taking her hand between both his, "life has a deeper significance since I have known you. I have learnt to *feel*—to know that I have a soul. My dearest, you have taught me more than all the schools."

"I am so glad!"

"Once I thought that science was the 'be-all and the end-all here'—that one need have nothing but facts. Agnosticism was my boast. But there is a deeper meaning in life now; a prescience of something divine that stirs my very soul. Is it the fruit of love?"

There was the very slightest droop of Vera's head. He did not see it. He was looking away over the mountain-tops to the stainless sky.

"Great heaven! If it should all be true! The infinite mercy—the endless bliss—bliss through all eternity! How weak, how utterly weak, are all our efforts in comparison. The digging out of a wretched fossil from a rock; the feeble effort to detect a crater in the moon. Think of all its insignificance in the presence of an untrammelled soul! What puny insects we are! And what giants we think ourselves!"

He was still looking upwards with a rapt expression in his eyes; but Vera's head drooped lower and lower.

"If I could only love this man as I loved *him*!" she thought. And, oh, how hard she strove to love him, to administer to his happiness in every way! Her life was one long sacrifice, and yet at times, when she saw his deep devotion to her, his unending goodness to every living thing, she felt that she did love him—that at least her

life would be incomplete without him. If the question had been put to her, "Should you care very much if you never saw him again?" she would probably have answered, "It would break my heart!" How little we know ourselves—less, perhaps, than we know others.

She had grown to call him by his Christian name. It had been an effort to her during the first days of their engagement, as it must be to any young girl when her lover is so many years older, no matter how deep the love may be; but it had come to her naturally now.

"Frank," she said, after they had been silent for some time.

"Yes, dearest?"

"I want to tell you something—something that has long troubled me. I could not tell you when you were so ill; but I feel that I must tell you now. There is something in what you have just said—in all this purity around us—which makes me feel that I cannot deceive you even in thought."

Bates did not seem surprised. He answered very quietly:

"I have always begged you to tell me everything. Don't you remember that long ago I said I might be able to help you if you did? I have always known that there was something you kept back."

"You make my task easier, as you always do. Well, at any rate, I will keep nothing back from you after this; but, oh, forgive me if I cause you pain!"

"You would give me more pain by not telling me. Well, what is it?"

"Do you remember that day when you said to me that you thought there had been something between me and Mr. Chetwode?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"And I told you there was nothing."

"Yes."

"I kept something back. There had been something. I had seen him that day."

"I know it."

"You know that I met him that day?"

"Yes, on the heath near the lodge."

"Oh, how could you know?"

"I saw you."

"You saw us—you!" exclaimed Vera in utter bewilderment. "How could you? You were weak and ill—unable to go out."

"I was weak and ill certainly, but you know I saw you go out. I spoke to you. I longed so intensely to go with you that I was envious of the very breezes, of the sun, of the sky, that had you all to themselves. I was feeling so much better that I thought I would follow you to the heath and give you a surprise. With the help of a stick I hobbled along up the moorland track to the top. There I saw you together."

"Oh, no, no!"

"Don't be alarmed. I did not stay a second, but I saw enough to convince me that you were in great trouble, and I longed to know what it was. When you came back I questioned you in the hope that you would tell me. You only said there was nothing between you then, and I knew you would not tell me what was false."

"And in spite of this you have been the same to me. How I wish I had trusted you then! You make me love you more than ever."

Bates knew—none better—that it was the love that springs from gratitude, but he did not say so. It would only distress her more.

"Well, now tell me. What was the trouble?" he said.

Then, with her hand still in his, Vera told him all her sad tale: her engagement to Hugh, her meeting with Grace Carlyon, the revelation in Dublin, her flight, her doubts of Hugh, their meeting after the fire, and the promise she had abstracted from him. The only thing she kept back was the incident about Lord Burnham. The latter was fast following in the footsteps of his brother towards the silent land. She would only bring reproach on a dying man by mentioning it. When she had finished Bates looked at her for the first time.

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

Bates was not demonstrative in his affections. He always felt the difference in their years, in spite of his love for her, and he feared to overdo the outward signs of affection; but he drew her towards him and kissed her forehead softly.

"You are not angry with me even now?" she said.

"Angry! You have made a sacrifice at which the angels might weep. It is deeds like this which redeem the wickedness of the world, which make even a hardened sceptic like me feel that there is something beyond fossils. Why, if you had lived in the days of the saints they would have canonised you for this."

"Oh, hush, hush! It is nothing to the forbearance you have shown. Who else would have cared for me but you, after seeing us on the heath?"

"Well, we won't discuss that. Let it suffice that I do care for you more than for all the world beside. But now I must know the rest. Have you heard from him since he went to America?"

"Yes."

"And has he seen her?"

"Yes."

Every word seemed an effort to her now. Bates noticed it, but his own future was so wholly dependent on her answer to his next question that he could think of nothing else. In spite of all his stoicism his lips could hardly frame the words.

"And is she guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty."

There was another pause. The stillness of the summer afternoon was around them, the awful stillness of the mountains. They could almost hear each other's heart-beats.

"Then he will marry her?"

"He has married her."

He knew what it cost her to utter the words. It was the death knell of her early love. Henceforth she must go forth to a new life. The dead past must bury its dead.

He passed his arm round her and drew her still closer to him without a word.

CHAPTER XXXV.

GRACE CARLYON'S STORY.

HUGH CHETWODE landed safely in New York from the floating palace which had borne him across the Atlantic. He went at once to Low's Exchange in the Broadway, as the agent had informed him that he could there ascertain in what particular town the company was playing to which Grace Carlyon belonged.

He found they were performing that week in Boston and he prepared to start for that favoured town as soon as possible. There was no train, however, for some hours, and to divert his thoughts, for he was by no means in an enviable frame of mind, he took a turn down the Broadway in order that he might get some notion as to what the renowned American city was like. He had never been in the States before and his first impression was by no means favourable. The unsightly overhead railway, apparently of the most flimsy construction, the innumerable telegraph poles, the number and variety of the outside signs, the innumerable flags, and above all, the endless heaps of litter on the side-walks and in the roadways seemed to him a most extraordinary jumble; and he marvelled how a nation that prided itself upon its "go-ahead" character could be so far behind the Old Country in the order and tidiness of its streets. He was by no means sorry when the time came for him to take his place in the train which was to convey him to his destination, and as it entered upon the lovely scenery that lies between New York and Boston his mind gradually became calmer, and he was able to consider what his course of action would be should he succeed in getting an interview with Grace.

It is seldom that a man finds himself in so difficult a position as Hugh was in now. Vera's emphatic words had raised doubts in his mind as to whether he had not behaved with great cruelty to the girl he was about to see. If he had done so, honour, justice, and rectitude all called aloud for him to make amends. Besides which, there was his faithful promise to Vera. On the other hand he felt if Grace

were innocent, there was an end to all his happy dreams. Life must henceforth be one continued course of enforced duty instead of the blissful existence he had pictured to himself when he set out from Sydney. However, the die was cast, and, whatever the future had in store, there was now no turning back.

"It is indeed a strange world," he said, as he leaned from the window to gaze on a peculiarly beautiful bit of river scenery which they were then passing. "How impossible it is to foretell even for a day what may happen in this life. If anyone had told me only a few weeks ago that I should ever be speeding through America in search of her, I should have scouted the idea as a sheer impossibility. It is useless to speculate as to the future. It is impossible to fathom it."

In the midst of his musings the train rolled into the literary capital of the United States, and Hugh at once proceeded to the Boston Theatre to make inquiries respecting Grace. He ascertained the hotel at which she was staying and was about to proceed there when it occurred to him that the shock of his sudden appearance might have a serious effect on one in so weak a state as Vera had described. He therefore asked for writing materials and penned the following note:

"MY DEAR GRACE,—You will be more than astonished to get this note and to know that I am so near you. When I tell you that I have come from England on purpose to see you, you will not find it in your heart to refuse me an interview, no matter what your feelings may now be. I am told by a warm friend of yours that I have treated you cruelly in not giving you the opportunity of explaining some things I heard about your life before I met you. Believe me I took the course which seemed the wisest to me, though it cost me some bitter pangs. However, all this had better be explained in words. I shall anxiously await your answer.

"Yours most sincerely,

"HUGH CHETWODE."

This he despatched by special messenger with instructions to wait for a reply. It came within half an hour, and was as follows:

"DEAREST HUGH,—My prayers are answered at last! Come to me quickly. I shall be alone.

"GRACE."

More than ever Hugh thought there was no going back. He had half anticipated, half hoped that she would refuse to see him. He did not know the strength of her love or the depth of her suffering. His coming was to her like the coming of one from the dead.

When Hugh entered the room where Grace was waiting for him he found her standing opposite the door with straining eyes and lips so white and quivering that she could hardly articulate. In spite of himself his heart melted at the sight of her emotion. He advanced

to her and put out his hand, but she stretched out both her own wildly, and looked as if she would have fallen but that he caught her in his arms.

"Have you come at last?" she murmured. "Oh, how I have waited and longed for you! Why have you made me suffer so?"

"You must not think I have not suffered also. You must know what I heard about you. I thought it more merciful not to see you."

"Oh, no! It was too cruel. You might at least have asked."

"But why did you not tell me? Why leave me to find out that dreadful fact?"

"Because I felt myself innocent, and was so happy in your love that I could not bear to awaken the past. I wished to bury it for ever. There was no need for you ever to have known. But I cannot talk of it yet. Oh! let me feel that you are here once more. I cannot realise it. It is like some wonderful dream."

She sat down in a chair beside where he stood and took his hand and pressed it to her lips again and again. He had tortured her almost beyond endurance, but he was here again now, and this was the one fact of any importance to her. All the rest was forgotten.

It would have been brutal in him not to respond. He passed his hand softly down her hair. Then he took a chair by her side and kept her hand in his.

"Grace," he said, "I have come a long way to hear your story. After what I heard I cannot conceive what your explanation is. Will you tell me?"

"Tell you what? What did you hear?"

"I heard (and from a man who must have known the truth) of your connection with Colonel Waring. I must speak the truth. You lived with him as his wife."

"It is true, but I thought I was his wife."

"You *thought* you were his wife?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean that he married you?"

"Yes. It is a horrible story. It is no wonder I did not care to speak of it ever. Let me tell it in my own way. I will keep back nothing now—that is, if I have the strength to tell it."

"But he must have been an awful scoundrel."

"He was not immaculate, but he was very good to me, and he had lived a wretched life until he met me. His one sin was his having deceived me."

"But how? He must have been known as a married man."

"No. He had married a woman abroad—an Italian. She led him a wretched life for three years. Then she was false to him, and he left her never to return. All this I found out after—after I had left him. He was rich, and gave her an ample allowance on condition that she never came to England. He was still a comparatively young

man, but his life seemed blighted. It was just after I had gone on the stage. There was a month's vacation. I went to stay with an aunt at Ryde; she was well off and in a good position. At her house I met Colonel Waring. No one had the least suspicion he was married. He fell desperately in love with me. My aunt encouraged the match, and we became engaged. There appeared to be no reason why we should not be married, but somehow, while we were at Ryde he did not seem to press it. One day he proposed that we should all take a run down in his yacht to the Cornish coast—my aunt and I, and Colonel Waring and a friend. We went to Penzance. From there we took excursions to various parts, among others to the Lizard. Colonel Waring seemed to take a great fancy to the place, and I, though I was never overmuch in love with him, but, girl-like, thought it a good match, was quite content to remain there, as it was such a delight to me to wander about that delicious coast. So we stayed on week after week.

"One day Colonel Waring said he had a surprise for me. I asked him what it was. He said he had spoken to the clergyman at Ruan Minor about marrying us, that he had asked my aunt, and that she had raised no objection. Would I consent to be married there? We had been in the parish long enough, and he could see no reason why our engagement should be prolonged.

"At first I was indignant that he should have arranged it all, as it were, before speaking to me, but he said the idea had only occurred to him since we had been there—that he hated a fashionable wedding. The clergyman's daughter, whose acquaintance we had made, would be my bridesmaid, and his friend, who was much older than himself, would give me away. My aunt had evidently fallen in with the plan to make all safe, knowing that I was securing a rich man. Well, I could see no good reason for objecting if they all wished it, and we were married in the quietest way possible. Only a few local papers mentioned the marriage. We went away for a week to the north coast of Cornwall. Then we joined the others at Penzance and went back to the Isle of Wight. We did not, however, go to Ryde. Colonel Waring took a house at Freshwater, and when the yacht was laid up we went abroad and then returned to Freshwater for the winter. We led a very quiet, happy life. He did not care for gaiety, and I was sufficiently fond of him to be content to live quietly also. So it might have gone on until now but for a most unfortunate event."

All this time Hugh's heart had been full of self-reproaches. He began to see how brutal his conduct had been and what suffering he must have caused. He passed his arm round the girl by his side.

"My poor Grace, what you must have suffered!" he said.

"Oh, do not dwell on it!" she cried. "It is a hateful story, but I must finish it now. One day a cousin of Colonel Waring appeared suddenly at Freshwater. He had just come from abroad. I could

see his coming was distasteful to my husband, as I thought him, and it certainly was to me, for I could not like him. He was of a cold, cynical disposition, and had a way of sneering at almost everything. The worst of it was, he developed a decided fondness for me, and was so desperately attentive that it irritated me. I spoke to Colonel Waring, and he begged me to put up with it and not show any annoyance. 'I have reasons for not wishing to offend him,' he said.

"One day—shall I ever forget it?—my husband had been called over to Portsmouth unexpectedly, and left me alone with his cousin. He proposed a walk over the cliffs. It was a lovely day, and I had no good reason for refusing. Besides, I remembered my husband's injunctions. He had been growing more and more marked in his attentions every day.

"We had walked some distance from home over the downs when he suddenly began talking about our quiet life and remarked that it must be very dull for me. Then he began, with the utmost effrontery, to make love to me—telling me that I had captivated him from the very first, that it was no use concealing it, and that he admired me more than any woman he had ever seen. I stopped dead with amazement. I was furious at his insulting me in that manner, and said he would not have dared to say such things if my husband had been at home. Then he said, in a sneering tone, 'Your husband!' But I can't go on!"

She drooped her head on Hugh's breast. The effort to proceed with her story seemed too much for her; but she nerved herself to the task and looked up again.

"I had better get it over now. I asked him what he meant by the sneer. He laughed and said, 'I suppose when he is tired of you he will leave you as he did his wife.'

"His wife!' I exclaimed in utter amazement. 'What do you mean?'

"What do I mean? Why, that he has a wife—a legitimate wife—living in Italy.'

"It is a lie!' I said. 'An abominable lie!'

"It is true,' he answered; 'as true as that I'm standing here. Ask him yourself. He did me a bad turn once, and I swore I would be revenged. I think now I have my revenge.'

"The scoundrel!" muttered Hugh.

"You know how impulsive I am," Grace went on. "At that moment I was half inclined to throw myself over the cliff, but reason came to my aid. I turned at once, and went back to the house. Colonel Waring had not returned. The cousin had followed me, though not a word was exchanged. Whether he spoke the truth or not, he had played the part of a scoundrel, and I despised him from my very heart. As we reached the door he said, 'I am sorry I have told you this, but your manner provoked me, and it slipped out unawares. It will not do for me to remain now. It will only lead

to a row, and above all things I dislike a row. I will pack my bag and depart by the next coach.'

"I felt it was the best thing he could do. I did not attempt to stop him; I despised him too much. I tried to nerve myself for what was before me. Indignation kept me going, and I got through the day somehow until my husband's return. When he came in I met him in the hall and asked him to come into the dining-room. He saw by my face that something serious was the matter and followed me.

"When we were in the room, I shut the door. An unnatural calm seemed to come over me, and I stood facing him, determined to know the truth.

"'That precious cousin of yours has been making love to me,' I said.

"His face went quite white as I spoke. I could see that he feared what was to come. He tried to make a joke of it.

"'I suppose you are romancing?' he said.

"'I was never further from it,' I answered. 'He made love to me, and I repelled him. I hate the sight of him more than ever. Then he told me something that startled me—a thing I could not believe—and I told him so.'

"His face grew whiter and whiter. You may judge what I felt. When I saw this I knew there must be worse behind—something so bad that it blanched the cheek of a man who was not much given to feeling.

"'What did he tell you?' he asked.

"'He says I am not your wife—that you have a wife living in Italy. Tell me it is a lie, that I may brand him as a liar for ever.'

"He seemed to shrink into himself. There was no need for words. I read the dreadful truth in his face.

"'He told you this?' he gasped. 'The villain—the awful villain!'

"'I don't want your denunciations,' I said; 'I want a plain answer. Is what he said the truth?'

"'God help me, it is,' he answered. 'It is useless my concealing the fact. If he has taken this course he will speak of it publicly. He does not know we are married. If he did he might possibly prosecute me for bigamy—in fact, would do so.'

"By this time my brain was in a flame.

"'And you have allowed this man to think I am not your wife, have you?' I asked.

"'What could I do? He knew she was alive. He was in love with her himself, but she chose me. Would to heaven she had chosen him, they would have been kindred spirits. Ever since, he has dogged my steps with concentrated malignity. He chooses to think that if she had married him she would have led a virtuous life. He little knows her.'

"'That is neither here nor there,' I answered. 'You have wrecked my life and you have your reward. We part now and for ever.'

"'Grace, you cannot mean it,' he cried, 'you know I love you. I have striven to make you happy. You cannot mean to leave me.'

"'At once and for ever,' I said.

"I don't know what it was in me that seemed to bear me up at this terrible moment. I suppose I have unusual powers of endurance, but my mind was made up instantly. I suppose I had never cared for him overmuch, and I sickened at the thought of my position.

"'Not another hour, not another moment will I remain here,' I said. 'You have done me an injury that nothing can soften or atone for. You have ruined my life.'

"He saw it was useless to attempt to stop me.

"'You will at least keep the secret of our marriage,' he said. 'You know the consequences that it will entail if you make that known.'

"'Yes; I will keep the secret,' I said. 'It is not likely that I should care to bring myself or you within the clutches of the law. You are safe as far as I am concerned.'

"Within an hour I had left the house. I went back to London to some lodgings I had occupied when I was on the stage. There I utterly broke down. The landlady, who was a kind old soul, nursed me through a long illness. I recovered after a time and began to lay plans for the future. I resolved to return to the stage. My aunt had fallen into ill-health—it was not necessary to explain to her. She had another niece looking after her. I obtained an engagement, and by-and-by I began to forget this very dreadful passage in my life. I heard that the Colonel had gone abroad; then that he was cruising in the Mediterranean. I did not care to hear much about him and tried to forget all my trouble. Then an astounding thing happened."

"What was it?"

"It is too dreadful; but I must tell you all now. I cannot return to it again. I had an engagement in Jersey. I was feeling very weak and ill on my way back, but on board the steamer I made the acquaintance of a sweet girl who afterwards joined our company. She cheered me up a little; I only wish I could find out what has become of her. Well, we were going up Southampton Water when the steamer ran into a yacht. There was an awful crash and the yacht was sunk. It was *his*! He was drowned that night. Oh, shall I ever forget it!"

"My poor Grace."

"Well, at least I felt that there was an end of it all. But it was an awful end."

She broke off suddenly. She was seized with a sudden fit of coughing which seemed to shake her delicate frame to pieces, and leant upon the back of the chair as if quite exhausted.

Hugh was much concerned.

"What does this mean?" he said. "Have you had that cough long?"

"Ever since that dreadful weather at Chicago," she answered. "The thermometer was twenty below zero. I wonder it did not kill me. Then the wear and tear of this life, the terribly long journeys, the perpetual packing and unpacking. One need be as strong as a horse to stand it."

"But how can you act with a cough like that?"

"By some merciful dispensation of Providence it has never yet attacked me in the middle of my part. If it did I should collapse."

Hugh was silent a moment. He had pledged himself to a self-sacrifice. He must go through with it. The time had come to speak.

"I must take you away from it all," he said. "I must take you to a warmer climate where you can get some rest and peace."

"Do you mean that you will marry me? Do you really mean that?"

"If you will forgive me and will be my wife. It is I who must be the suppliant."

"Forgive you! What is it they say in the Bible?—that you are to forgive your brother seventy times seven times, isn't it? Well, if you asked me to forgive you seventy times seven thousand times I should do so. But do you really mean that you will marry me and take me away? Oh, Hugh, that would be too delicious!"

"I do mean it. What else have I come for?"

Grace looked up archly.

"And you haven't another wife living," she said. "Remember, I have been taken in once."

A sudden pang shot through Hugh's heart. After all, he could not be quite open with her. If Grace had only known—known that his heart was entirely another's—she might have thought this case worse than the first. Happily she did not know. How seldom all the truth is revealed!

She saw the pained look, however, and misinterpreted it.

"Oh, no!" she said. "I can trust you, I know. Oh, it is all too delightful! Do you really mean that you will take me away?"

"Yes. When does your engagement end?"

"In a fortnight's time in New York. But tell me, are you quite convinced of my innocence? Do you blame me now?"

"Blame you! I pity you from the bottom of my heart. I can only think what a wretch I have been to add to your sufferings all these years."

"Well, don't talk about that any more now. I want to enter into a compact with you. If you are quite satisfied with my explanation, let us never, never mention the subject again. Do you agree?"

"Yes, most willingly."

"Then in future it shall be all cakes and ale. Oh, it is too good to be true! How glad I shall be to get away from all this. I am sick, sick, sick of the footlights. Where shall you take me?"

"To Australia."

"To live in a log-hut, to cook your dinner for you, to do the washing, and to make the bread. Shall I have to shear the sheep? Oh! forgive me, Hugh. I am out of my senses with delight."

And the next moment she was clinging to his breast. The reaction had come. Her joy was almost more than she could bear.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AVALANCHES.

LONG before Vera was down on the morning after their arrival at the Wengern Alp, Frank was hammering at her door.

"Miss Fane!" he cried.

"Well, what is it?"

"Oh, make haste! There's avalanches all over the place."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, they're shooting about like fun. Do come and see. I've seen three already."

"But, good gracious! isn't it dangerous?"

"Oh, no! They're miles and miles away, but you can see them quite plainly. It's *such* fun."

"Very well; I'll be down directly."

She quickly dressed and joined Frank in front of the hotel. Everything in this wonderful land was like some magical dream. The scene before her seemed to hold her breathless.

The ground sloped rapidly downward from their feet in terraces of grass and rock, until it was lost in the white mists which lay in the valley beneath. Out of this vapour rose the tops of pines, ghostly and weird in their indistinctness. Beyond them a dense sea of vapour stretched apparently for miles, and out of it, like gaunt precipices hung in mid-air, rose the stupendous buttresses of the Jungfrau. At an angle where one usually looked for sky, crags of granite of appalling height met the gaze, and above these the virgin snows of the summit lay still and white in the early beams.

As Vera gazed quite spellbound a sudden little white cloud seemed to shoot downward on the slope of the Monch to the left, and after an interval a low, dull sound like distant thunder fell upon the ear.

"There's another. That's four," said Frank, who began capering with delight.

"That! That an avalanche!" exclaimed Vera. "Why, it was like a little puff of smoke."

"That little puff of smoke was probably several thousand tons of snow," said Bates, who at that moment came round the corner of the house. "You must remember that it was some three miles away, and that you are looking at a surface of snow and ice at least two miles in perpendicular height. But how are you feeling this morning, and what brings you out so early?"

"There is the young magician who lured me forth," said Vera, pointing to Frank, who was amusing himself by leaping from a mass of rock that bordered the path.

"I've seen four avalanches, uncle," shouted the boy. "One was a jolly one. It came smashing down there," he added, pointing to the precipice immediately below the Jungfrau.

He had hardly spoken when a crack like the distant sound of a pistol was heard, and the next moment Bates pointed to some masses of white gliding rapidly down a slope of rock below the Jungfrau glacier, which lay just below the summit of the mountain. An instant after the whole mass shot over the perpendicular precipice, and thundered from ledge to ledge until it was lost in the sea of vapour below.

Vera watched it in breathless amazement.

"That was wonderful!" she said.

Even Frank stood and gazed in wide-mouthed astonishment.

"That was a stunner!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, that was worth seeing," said Bates. "It was an ice avalanche. It reminds me of twenty years ago. They are very frequent here in certain conditions of the atmosphere. I have sometimes heard them going on all night."

"But what causes them?" asked Vera.

"The cause of an ice avalanche is the gradual slipping down of the glacier towards the precipice. Of course, when the foot of the glacier overhangs the precipice it breaks off from its own weight and comes thundering down, as you saw."

"But what makes the glacier work down?"

"There are various causes. One is the enormous weight of the superincumbent snow—the gradually accumulating pressure from above which forces the ice down the incline—then, of course, there is the natural tendency of the ice to slip down an inclined surface. Another reason is a very curious one. The surface of the glacier is covered with large and small rents and fissures. As the hot sun melts the surface by day, thousands of tiny rivulets may be seen coursing down the glacier. These fill up the crevices, and when the frost comes at night the water freezes and the expansive force of the freezing water forces the ice in the direction of the least resistance—that is, downward. This action is continuous in summer. Where the glacier passes over an uneven surface of rock it is broken up into innumerable crags and pinnacles, but where the rocky bed is smooth the surface of the glacier is comparatively smooth."

"Then are the glaciers always travelling downwards?"

"Undoubtedly where there is any slope, and in the majority of cases there is. I don't quite remember the figures, but I think it is about a foot a day that the Mer-de-glace at Chamouni advances. The glaciers come down to the valleys and melt away when they reach the lower levels. A river runs away from the foot of all of them. That is the water coming down from the rocky bed where the ice has melted and where the water has percolated from the surface."

"It is all very wonderful."

"Well, you are lucky to have seen a snow-avalanche and an ice-avalanche directly you arrive. You will have to be introduced to a mud-avalanche now."

"What's a mud-avalanche?" asked Frank, whose attention, boy-like, was attracted by the idea of mud.

"You get them after heavy rains. The whole earthy side of a mountain slope becomes detached by the torrents and slides down suddenly in a mass of about the consistency of cream. Large tracts are covered, roads rendered impassable. I remember once when we were driving from Grindelwald the road was swept away, and men had to drag our carriage across some fields to a point where the road was again practicable."

"Oh, I hope I shall see a mud-avalanche!" cried Frank, again capering around in the exuberance of his spirits induced by the wonderful sights and the exquisite air of the mountains.

"I hope you won't, for it means much rain," said his uncle. "But come, I am dying for breakfast. I feel as if I could eat an avalanche. After breakfast, if you don't mind a scramble, I will show you something worth seeing in the way of avalanches."

When they had finished breakfast, and Frank had disposed of enough Swiss honey to stock a hive for the winter, Bates said:

"If you want to see an ice-avalanche at close quarters I think I can manage it for you."

"How do you mean?" said Mrs. Meredith. "You surely don't want to be swept away."

"I've not the least intention of getting swept away, but if you can amuse yourself for the morning, I can give them a treat."

"Oh! I shall be very happy here. It is too hot to move about much, and if we are going on to Grindelwald to-morrow I had better rest to-day."

"Very well. Then we will start at once. We shall probably be back by lunch time."

They were soon in light marching order, and Bates led the way down the pastures below the hotel until they came to a pine-wood of no great dimensions. Passing through this, for the mists of the morning had now lifted, they came on some open ground, in the lower part of which the stream from the Eiger glacier was rushing down to the valley below. There was a rude bridge over the stream consisting of two pine stems side by side. Scrambling over this they

reached a ridge which seemed untrodden by a single human foot. It was covered with stunted and broken pines and a wild undergrowth, and ran out to within a quarter of a mile of the huge precipices of the Jungfrau. They followed it to where it ended abruptly in an almost perpendicular descent into the Trümlenthal valley. Here they seated themselves on a fallen tree and surveyed the scene around. In front of them was the precipice, apparently within a stone's throw. To the right the gorge below them fell abruptly until it was lost in the mists of the valley. Away to the left rose the Eiger and the Monch above the slopes of their respective glaciers. Between them and the precipice in front was a gorge of many hundred feet in depth, and from this rose a conical heap of what appeared to be shattered masses of ice and stones. They were amid a world of ice, but the verdure was fresh beneath their feet, and the sun was beating down upon them with intense brilliancy.

They had hardly seated themselves when again the crack was heard above the precipice in front. They were so close under it that its outline cut the sky apparently above their heads, though the gully lay between them and its base.

"That is another mass broken off," said Bates. "Look out! It will be over the brink in a moment."

As he spoke the avalanche came pouring over like a Niagara of ice. The effect was astounding. Thousands of tons of ice fragments from the size of a cricket-ball to that of a small house fell thundering downwards. Here and there the masses impinging on some ledge or projection became pounded up into still smaller fragments, until at last the whole mass fell upon the heap of *débris* below, while the finer particles, now ground by contact with the rocks to a fine powder, blew away up the valley like spray.

The effect was stupendous. Vera almost shuddered and drew closer to Bates.

"Is there no danger?" she said.

"None whatever. The outermost fragments do not come anywhere near the bluff we are on. I saw the same thing years ago. How methodically Nature pursues her work through the endless ages! Through what countless years these avalanches have been falling!"

He was interrupted by a shout from Frank, who was poking among the undergrowth a few yards away.

"Wild strawberries!" he cried, in an access of delight.

It was absolutely true. In this oasis amid the snow and ice, nurtured by the summer sun, the delicately-flavoured little crimson berries were lurking amid the leaves. The boy quickly gathered a handful and brought them to Vera.

"This is indeed a land of marvels. How could one ever dream of ripe strawberries in the midst of avalanches?" she said.

"It is the contrasts that are so wonderful. You may be half melted on a field of ice in these regions," answered Bates.

There was another crack and another avalanche, and again they gazed in mute wonder until its thunders ceased. Even Frank looked on in silent awe.

"Well, I think we may as well be going back," said Bates. "I thought I should give you a treat this morning."

"You have indeed. I never can forget this day."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN ARRIVAL.

As they drew near the hotel on their return a gentleman came down the slope to meet them.

"Why, bless my soul, it's Kean!" exclaimed Bates. "What on earth brings you here?" he added, as they shook hands.

"She did," answered Kean, laughing and pointing over his shoulder.

They looked up, and there was Lily Heath coming down the slope looking quite radiant. Both had hurried out without hat or bonnet. There was a general exclamation.

"But what does it mean?" said Bates. "Do you mean to say you are touring together? It's highly improper."

"Improper? Not a bit of it; we're MARRIED!" cried Kean, bursting into a laugh.

"Married!" exclaimed Vera and Bates in the same breath.

"Married as safe as a church," said Kean, taking his wife's hand.

"We quarrelled so desperately that neither could stand it any longer, so we married for the sake of peace and quietness."

"And have been quarrelling ever since, I expect," said Bates.

"Not a bit of it," struck in Lily. "We've been like turtle-doves ever since."

"Then you have carried out the marriage vow, I suppose, to 'love, honour, and obey.'"

"Yes, only we put it the other way about. He loves, honours, and obeys me."

"Yes, and a pretty tyrant she is. I daren't say my soul's my own."

"You haven't got one, dear," Lily remarked, taking her husband's arm. "You can't call a thing your own which you don't possess."

"Well, I can't say my body's my own, then, for she's dragged me here in the midst of the London season."

"And you can very well afford it. He's got so many commissions, Mr. Bates, through Frank's picture, that he's making a small fortune."

"And how many has he painted out?" asked Bates.

"Oh, I've put a stop to that altogether. As soon as a picture is in a satisfactory state, according to my judgment, I take it and lock it up. He frets and fumes for a week, and then he says I was quite right. Oh! I can tell you I manage him beautifully."

They were sauntering up the slope towards the hotel now, and Mrs. Meredith came to meet them.

"Fancy my amazement when I saw them walk in," she said.

"But when were you married, and where did you come from?" asked Bates.

"We were married a week ago. We saw your names in the visitors' book at Interlaken, and they told us you had gone on to Lauterbrunnen. We concluded you would come on here, and thought we might catch you. But, by Jove! this is fine," Kean added, looking at the mountains.

"Magnificent, is it not?" said Vera.

"Scrumptious, I should call it," said Kean; "but it's so awfully big. You couldn't get it all into a canvas."

"If you put it far enough off," said Bates.

"You're like the man in 'Punch,'" said Kean: "you think they look better a goodish bit off. That reminds me of a thing that really happened to me on the Thames the other day. I was sketching a bit of the river near a ferry. The ferryman came and looked on and delivered himself of the following sage remark: 'Well,' he said, 'I've often seen they things in the shop winders, but I thought they come from foreign parts.' He evidently thought England incapable of producing even a daub."

"He evidently thought *you* incapable, my dear, but you will improve under my tuition," said Lily.

"Well, it is a treat to see you both again," Bates went on, "but we are as hungry as a thousand hunters. We've lived on nothing but strawberries and avalanches since nine o'clock. Come along; we'll all lunch together."

"By the way," said Kean, when they were seated at the table, "we came upon some other friends of yours at Interlaken—the Lindsays. They were looking over the visitors' book, and we heard them mention your name, so I asked if they knew you. Astonishing what a lot of acquaintances one tumbles across in Switzerland."

Vera felt a shrinking at the heart when she heard this. She had not seen her friend Fanny Lindsay since their return from the East, and dreaded doing so, so much that was painful must be gone into. Kean went on:

"They are going on to Grindelwald. We shall probably meet them there if we go to-morrow. Nice people they seem."

Bates saw the change in Vera's face and read her feelings. He did not, however, see a way out of the difficulty. It was better, moreover, to get the meeting over, he thought. It must take place some time.

There was plenty to amuse them that afternoon. Bates took Kean for a scramble up the side of the Eiger glacier, mounting the old moraine, and so on to the ridge which runs down from the foot of the mountain to the hotel on the Little Schiedeck. The ladies elected to ramble about the slopes at the back of the hotel and

gather wild-flowers. Then, as the evening fell, they watched the rosy light on the summit of the mountains until the last gleam had died away and the cold shades of night seemed to strike the snows as with the hand of death. And through the gloom and mystery of the gathering night the dull roar of the avalanches still broke upon the ear at intervals, though they could no longer be seen.

They started early the next morning and arrived at Grindelwald by mid-day. Then after lunch they pushed on to the upper glacier and visited the ice grotto, which filled Frank with delight and Vera with amazement. To be walking in a tunnel whose walls were solid ice was a novel experience to both. On emerging, Bates called their attention to the curious yellow effect of the sunlight without.

"Why is it?" asked Frank.

"Your eyes have been seeing nothing but the blue light which comes through the ice ever since we have been in the cave. The yellowness is caused by the contrast. It looks like evening light."

When they got back to the Bear Hotel they inquired for the Lindsays and found they had arrived. Mr. Lindsay had strolled out, but Mrs. Lindsay was in her room. Vera thought it better to get the meeting over alone, so she went to her at once.

She tapped at the bedroom door with a nervous tremor at her heart. What would be her reception? What would her friend think of the course she had pursued?"

Mrs. Lindsay's voice told her to come in and she entered.

For a moment her friend did not know her. Then a quick look of recognition passed across her face.

"Vera! Good gracious! My dear child, how you are altered!"

Mrs. Lindsay was always downright and said out at once what she thought. Indeed, the change in Vera shocked her, but to Vera's relief she threw her arms about her and kissed her warmly.

"I have had a great deal to try me, as you know," said Vera.

"Yes; and a great deal more than you need have had. What on earth does it all mean? Why are you separated from the man who loved you so much? His letters and yours have been so short and unsatisfactory. I cannot understand it all. But, my dear child, sit down and tell me all about it."

"It is a long story. I am afraid I cannot go into it all. It is too painful."

"But why, why? It is a perfect mystery. He has married a woman he does not care for; he tells me so. And all to please you. How can it possibly please you?"

"She had the prior claim. He left her under a misapprehension, thinking she had led an evil life. He found she was innocent, and he did right to marry her."

"But it was all over and done with years ago. Even I never knew anything about it. Oh, Vera, Vera, you could not have loved him to let him do it!"

"Do not say that. You must know how much I loved him."

"And yet you have engaged yourself to another man?"

"Yes."

"But, why—why?"

"Because he loves me. Because he is so good. I never could have been happy with your brother, knowing that he had behaved badly to one who was so good a friend to me in my great trouble. He did what was right."

"Oh, my dear girl, you must get rid of these Utopian ideas. People don't ruin their lives, their happiness, for a mere idea in these days. We have grown more sensible."

"It is not a mere idea. I saw what Grace had suffered—how she still loved him. I made him go to her."

"And, in so doing, sacrificed your own happiness and his."

"That may be, but I could not have acted otherwise. My life would have been haunted by the thought of her misery. If she had heard I had married him—after all our friendship—I believe it would have killed her."

"Well, you are a wonderful girl, and I can't help loving you for it, though you have spoilt my brother's life. After all my plotting and scheming too! Oh, I had so set my heart on it. And to think you should be going to marry that fossil-digging Mr. Bates. Good heavens! when is it to be?"

"Oh, not yet. Don't let us talk of it!"

"Then you don't care for him? My poor child, how can I help you?"

"Oh, yes—yes, I do. I care for him very much, but I cannot make up my mind to marriage yet. Oh, please don't talk of it any more—at least not now. I am so glad to see you again. Now tell me all about yourself. Where have you been all this long time? What have you been doing? What a lot you must have to tell me."

And so the talk drifted off in commonplaces, and the dreaded interview had not proved half so dreadful as Vera had feared; for a very deep and genuine affection bound these two together, and it was next to impossible for them to feel angry with each other whatever happened.

Bates had given instructions for letters to be sent on to them at Grindelwald, and as she went to her room that night he handed one to Vera. She saw at a glance that it was from Australia and in Hugh's writing. For a moment her heart stood still, but she struggled to hide her emotion and went at once to her room.

(To be continued.)

DOWN THE BRISTOL CHANNEL.

ONWARD flows the widening river—
 Onward to the sea;
 Upward ocean's waves are rushing,
 And defiantly
 The rival waters meet and rage,
 Swells on the mighty "bore,"
 Till in the Atlantic's open arms
 Are hushed for evermore
 The strife and tumult which disturbed
 The Channel's straiter way,
 As fade the mocking shades of dusk
 In the unclouded day.

But calm all nature as we pass
 Between fair coast and coast—
 Between the southern shores of Wales,
 With the rich wealth they boast;
 And Northern Devon's famous cliffs
 Mantled in verdure bright—
 A hundred wild fantastic forms
 Bathed in the summer light—
 Strange shapes that mimic castle-forts,
 With spiral turrets high,
 And battlemented roofs and towers
 Cut clear against the sky.
 And here and there a smooth green field
 Marked by a low stone wall,
 Or sudden cleft, where sparkles down
 A silver waterfall.
 Further, a little sheltered cove,
 Or deep and wooded glen,
 Perfect in sweet tranquillity,
 Far from the haunts of men.
 Again, a rugged pile or rock
 O'ergrown with lichens gay—
 Warm tints of purple, gold, and red,
 Streaking the colder grey,
 And velvet mosses creeping down
 To catch the diamond spray.

And now the headland's lofty peaks
And level sands below
Take from the sunset's parting rays
A tender crimson glow,
Which gives a two-fold grace to that
So exquisite before—
A soft and mystic radiance
To all the fairy shore—
A charm so potent that it draws
The traveller's raptured eye
Back from the gorgeous pageantry
That paints the western sky,
And soothes the restless, yearning soul
With voiceless harmony.

Ah, who would change for wealth of Wales
Fair Devon's loveliness?
Would mines of gold bring half the joy,
The certain happiness,
That earthly beauty still can give,
Though but the phantom show
Of that supernal majesty
Which reaches us below
Only as spray that, laughing, leaps
From the high billow's crest,
Scarce hinting at the power that lies
In boundless ocean's breast?

Dance up, you feathery, dazzling foam,
But do not blind our eyes,
For yonder, in the burning West,
The Home of Promise lies—
And we would keep our vision clear
For that transcendent sight,
When beauty's source shall be revealed
In the Eternal Light!

EMMA RHODES.



PSYCHIC RECOGNITION.

BY CAPTAIN GAMBIER, R.N.

ALMOST every living thing on the face of the earth performs certain actions which prove beyond contradiction that there exist several senses beyond those five which science recognises.

Pigeons fly home at distances which preclude the possibility of sight. An insect in Brazil attacks and paralyses its prey by stinging it in the only vulnerable spot in its body, and does it exactly right the first time. A trout shifts his quarters from one side of a pond to another, and changes his colour in a few minutes to correspond with his environment. You can lift him out of the golden sandy bed of a Dartmoor stream, and he is gold and yellow. You put him into a mill-dam where the water is green with the reflection of the surrounding wood piles and sluice-gates. In five minutes he has got on a green and brown coat. Even his scarlet spots have changed to a sombre red. As far as my argument will go, further on, it is immaterial whether Nature does this for him or whether he does it himself. If we admit it is Nature, we are brought face to face with the fact that there is some intelligence with a particular interest in keeping that particular trout alive, for his green coat in the stream on Dartmoor would have cost him his life from the first otter that happened to come along.

So there we are, in a crux. Either a power beyond our comprehension, and, strange to say, beyond our power of belief, is watching over the life of our humble friend, or the humble friend can instantly study all the colours near him and mix up an infinite number of tones of some pigments just under his skin that will render him practically the same as his surroundings.

Of course, it would be easy to multiply these mysteries *ad infinitum*; but one trout is quite sufficient to produce the dilemma which I hope will justify my contention that we also, human beings, may possess faculties and undergo experiences utterly and absolutely beyond rational explanation—that our brains or minds, or whatever we are pleased to call all that in us which is not capable of being cut up and fried, constantly exhibit phenomena unconnected with any of the recognised senses.

That many of us by constant exercise produce an acuteness in our senses which seems almost superhuman—such as the sight and power of smell amongst savages—is, of course, admitted; but even these, carried to the most wonderful perfection, and with that of the most highly-developed memory to aid them, entirely fail to explain the phenomena which I have called psychic recognition for want of any

better definition of this external sense. The fundamental laws on which the investigation of phenomena rest are conspicuously wanting in such cases, whilst the only possible clue to it, and that illusory when closely examined, is that memory keeps a key with which she can unlock cells in our brains and release recollections of which we ourselves have lost every trace.

Is there here some remote atavism of our earlier animal progenitors? Is this strange instinct the rudiment that has remained to us of those inexplicable mysteries in the lower orders of life? An innumerable number of living creatures, even the lowest type of organism, act with more common-sense in adapting their lives to their environment than do human beings in, say, thirty cases out of a hundred. Through millions upon millions of years the human race must have gradually loosened its safer hold on instinct to cling closer to a life by reason. Still, one does not understand how that would strike the stone-deaf, stone-blind caterpillar who simulates death if the air round about him is disturbed, fearing the approach of the bird, who, the caterpillar is aware, prefers his meat alive. Were he unfortunately endowed with reason he would sometimes make mistakes which would prove fatal. He might say to himself: "The wind is shifting from south-west to north-east, and makes this eddy over me. I need not sham dead; it isn't a bird."

In passing may one not remark how strange it is that, as he has never *seen* or *heard* of a bird refusing to eat one of his family because he supposes him to be dead, he should know anything about it?

But having established a proposition (which, however, is not capable of contradiction, namely, that there are things we never can understand), we come to the difficult task of applying the same reasoning as regards human beings.

To most of us it indicates a want of proper balance if we find people believing in anything in connection with the human race that is outside and beyond us. Christ Himself foresaw the dilemma of raising Lazarus. He knew, "even if one were raised from the dead," no one would believe it, and there is the difficulty in bringing forward evidence sufficient to convince anyone of anything. But a flat refusal to believe that the laws of Nature have ever been broken to raise a dead man is not incompatible with a personal belief, derived from actual and personal experience, that things happen to one that we cannot explain.

On the other hand, it is easy enough to reject on the same grounds the evidence of this state of things which I wish to adduce in support of my theory. It is open to anyone to say, "Your facts are wrong," or simply, "It is invention."

But I do not stand alone in these experiences, and it is expressly to ventilate the subject and to invite inquiry, or to draw forth corroborative examples, that I have written this article. I have met so many people who share with me this common experience that it has

now become, in my mind, one of those puzzling subjects which are none the less incredible because they are inexplicable.

Briefly it is this: that some people have the faculty of recognising persons whom they have known ever so slightly, when to do so is a matter of apparent impossibility. It is "knowing them again" rather than recognition, when no reason for "knowing them again" exists—people we meet unexpectedly after years and years under totally changed circumstances, whose very existence is forgotten by us, whose life or death is to us equally unimportant, who have had no personal trait which could have graven itself on our memory, no peculiarity of voice or outline of figure, no trick or habit to betray them, no squint, strange ears, bald head, broken teeth, deformed hand, club foot, or anything else that could have lain dormant in one's mind and assist in the awakening of recognition.

I lay stress on this because, according to my own experience, "knowing persons again" has had nothing to do with memory in the ordinary acceptation. I can honestly say that in many cases of recognising people, their individuality, as I beheld them again, has had nothing to do with what I remembered they were like. I knew Smith twenty-five years ago, when he was thirty. I see him again when he is fifty-five. He is no longer the Smith I knew. He is now bald, wrinkled; his nose is red; he has false teeth and a glass eye; his slim figure has vanished into fat. *But I know he is Smith.* He is Smith of fifty-five, and I see him and know him, and do not see young Smith in him or anything by which I can remember what he was like in the old days.

How do I *know* him? He has not opened his mouth, so it is not his voice betrays him. He may be several yards away, which to me, being abnormally short-sighted, means that he is a mere block of humanity. But I know him through my sixth sense. It is borne in on me that he is Smith—Smith who kicked me at school, or bullied me in the gunroom of a frigate, or lent me money in the nick of time, or merely did nothing but walk across the stage of my early life, a voiceless and uninteresting dummy, to walk out of it again in the same aimless manner.

Now, bearing in mind the extreme difficulty of procuring human evidence which will stand searching investigation on any subject, I have most carefully selected out of a great number of cases of this kind that have happened to me only those where I myself can neither now, nor did I at the time, gain the slightest light as to how they came about. In every case the identity of the people through mere memory of form or feature had, I believe, become impossible, and in many instances I barely saw the persons—in fact, in one or two did not actually see their faces. But in order to bring out these points something of the details of the cases is necessary.

On one occasion when a midshipman in H.M.S. *Retribution* in the Crimea, accompanied by a messmate, another mid, son of Farquharson

of Invercauld, I rode from Kamiesh, near where my ship lay, to Balaklava. After spending the day at Balaklava, when we were going to start back again, I found, to our dismay, that my horse was so dead lame that he could hardly stand. Night was coming on, our ship going to sea at daylight. The alternatives were to walk the whole distance (about fourteen miles if I remember right) or for me to ride behind Farquharson. An experiment of the latter alternative sent us both flying over the horse's head, whilst the Greek landlord of the shanty where we had put up, strongly dissuaded us from attempting the first, as he said that the roads were not safe at night, being infested by cut-throats and camp-followers of every nationality.

To increase our dilemma Farquharson and I had only two or three shillings between us, and naturally not a soul was willing to lend us a horse which they might never see again. In this perplexity a youngish man came forward, an Englishman, and offered to lend me sufficient to hire a horse on my note of hand. I went into the shanty and drew a species of bill on my agents, Messrs. Stilwell and Co., and handed it to this obliging person in exchange for two sovereigns.

He was in no way remarkable except for his kindness in befriending two unknown midshipmen. He said he was connected with some firm of army contractors, but I did not then know his name, as the bill was payable to bearer. Some months after, it is true, I did learn his name, Booker, when I received my quarterly account from my agents, for he had forwarded my bill home with a letter.

In 1884, twenty-eight years after, I was coming up from Liverpool in the express, and a man sat opposite me who impressed me with a memory of Farquharson, long since dead and gone. Then, by no process of reasoning, I remembered Balaklava and our night ride; the whole scene seemed conjured up; the shanty, the Greek landlord; and then, suddenly I knew the man opposite me in the railway-carriage was my friend of the bill. I had not said a word to him up to that time, and I certainly did not see his name on any hat-box or other luggage. Moreover his name had escaped me, but I said to him: "We met long ago, in the Crimea; you once did me a good turn—cashd a bill for me in a Balaklava pot-house."

He stared for a moment and said: "You are quite right, I did cash a bill for two midshipmen. My name is Booker."

Now another story.

In 1871 or '72 I was staying in the house of some cousins in Gloucestershire, and Mr. Pascoe Glyn, a wealthy London banker, was one of the party. He left I think, two days after I arrived, and I do not remember to have spoken to him. There was nothing either then or after remarkable about him, in fact rather the reverse. He had passed totally out of my mind, as clean forgotten as a dead man, when towards the end of 1892, over twenty years after, I was attending Quarter Sessions at Newington Causeway, and when the Court was opened pressed in with the usual crowd of brother magistrates.

There is a long corridor between the magistrates' waiting-room and the Court; not well lighted. Separated from me by at least twenty other men, was a short person of whom I obtained no view but the back of his head. The name Pascoe Glyn flashed into my mind. I had never seen his name in the list of magistrates for Surrey, for the excellent reason that at that date it was not there, as he was only that day presenting himself to take the oath. Naturally it did not concern me in the least who he was, and under ordinary circumstances I should not have said anything to him, but so startled was I by this new experience of my theory of recognition, that risking that kind of rebuff which only an Englishman with money can properly administer, I pushed on and addressed him by name. Of course he did not remember me, or even my existence, though when I mentioned my name he knew it as the prefix my cousin had used to his to distinguish him. Now another.

It must have been in the year 1880 that my wife and I happened to get into an omnibus near the Marble Arch, the only other occupant of which was a man sitting at the farthest end, his back turned square towards us and gazing intently at the horses' backs. Again there was nothing remarkable about his back, but there was about his face, which however I could not see. I said immediately to my wife "That man is —, and I have not seen him since 1870 or '71 at Dieppe."

I waited for him to turn his head because I expected a certain feature, but, alas! whereas my old acquaintance had had a very ugly nose, concave and heeling over to one side, this man had as nice a nose as any one could wish for. Soon after this he got up to go out; but nose or no nose, so convinced was I of the man's identity that I said to him as he passed: "Are you not — —?"

It was, and I learnt from his relations afterwards that he had had a new nose put on. This man again I had completely lost sight of, and did not know if he was dead or alive.

In 1857 I was appointed midshipman to H.M. Frigate *Iris*, Captain William Loring, a choleric person whose free use of the cat caused numberless desertions amongst the bluejackets. On our way to Australia we put into Rio Janeiro, and one dark night I went ashore in charge of my boat to bring off the officers on leave.

It turned out that two of my regular crew had been persuaded by two men, who had been flogged for some trivial offence a few days before, to allow them to take their places in my boat. As the boat shot along the side of the quay which, even at that hour was crowded with niggers and loafers, these two men lay down their oars and, springing ashore, bolted up the dark streets. Suffice it to say they were never caught again, but the incident made a deep impression on me and what followed burnt it the more into my memory, as injustice always does. Naturally there was a row about it next morning, and I was "had up" before the skipper and was disgraced to naval cadet by

that amiable functionary, because I had not noticed, in a pitch dark night, that the two bow oarsmen of a crew of ten were not of my proper crew.

I think my *amour propre* felt as sorely as any of the backs of the deserters, and I began to realise what a hell-on-earth any place can be where unbridled temper has the hopes and destiny of others at its mercy. But to return to the story.

It was more than thirteen years after that I was on leave, on half-pay, in Australia and was staying at Ravensworth, a station belonging to the well-known cavalry officer, General Sir Baker Russell and his brothers. One night, riding about the neighbouring township, Singleton, on coming down to the bank of the River Hunter, which lay between me and my home, I found that the water was rising rapidly in flood. I was looking about in the dark trying to recognise the ford, which in the morning had not been over the horse's hocks, but must now be nearly up to the girths, when I saw a man on horseback higher up the stream evidently also in search of a crossing-place. As clearly as I can remember anything, the magnificent harbour of Rio, the old six-and-twenty gun frigate, the quay and the scene of the men bolting up it rose in my mind; and though I could not positively swear I knew that the man on the horse near me was one of them, I had a kind of conviction that he had acted a part in it.

Now in those days and in a lonely part of the bush it was not always desirable to approach any one too near in the dark, and especially about Ravensworth, where a notorious gang of bushrangers was just then doing as they liked; and we did not.

In ordinary circumstances I should have waited and seen him cross first; should have followed if he got over and have ridden back to Singleton if he got drowned. So I called out to him asking him if he knew the ford, with the knowledge that the tone of my voice and my mode of addressing him would show him at once that I was not likely to be a bushranger. He found the ford, volunteered to cross first, and I followed him. Then we rode on in the dark, side by side. He was bound for Musselburgh, the next township, where he told me he had a small farm, a wife and three girls, and was doing well. And as he talked I became sure of my man's identity. But I reflected that he would not perhaps be overjoyed at my recognition, for desertion and its consequences dog a man's steps to the grave. So I approached the matter cautiously; told him I was in the Navy, but on half-pay, and finally brought in the name of the *Iris*. At the mention of the name he wheeled round sharp and looked hard in my face.

"Good heavens!" he cried, "were you with that old —— Loring?"

"Yes," I said. "I was the midshipman who got disrated, thanks to your bolting."

I believe I was supposed there and then to arrest him—being myself still in the Service—but I did not, for two good reasons; first

that I could not have done so had I wished to ; secondly, that my sympathies were entirely with the man. For I remembered my own feelings those thirteen years ago when I too, but for bringing dishonour on my name and sorrow at home, would willingly have deserted.

Again a *rencontre* in Australia.

On leaving my home to go out there, I was driven to the Cheltenham Railway Station by a queer old local Jehu we always employed, by name of Fowles ; an ancient person with that hazy idea of geography (which, however, is by no means confined to his class) which, when he learnt I was going to Australia, induced him to request that if I saw his son "in them parts," would I ask him to write home, as the old people had heard nothing of him for years.

I have never been quite clear in my own mind whether I had ever seen this son Bob, or not, though possibly I may have, as my brothers and I used to frequent their mews in search of rats. Anyhow, when a year later, in a distant part of Australia, I one day rode into the yard of a small bush grog-shop and gave my horse to a kind of loafer who was hanging about, it is perfectly inexplicable to me that I immediately knew this was the errant Bob, who, up to that moment, had vanished completely from my memory and all concerning him.

I could multiply these instances indefinitely were I to relate what others have told me of their own experiences of a similar nature, but I do not find that all people receive the impression that they have seen or knew the persons they came across unexpectedly in the same way. To some this recognition comes connected with a calling to mind of scenery, or of some room or house ; to others, some smell, like the smell of the sea or of a forest, or of some strong scent ; whilst to many others, whose stories I have made notes of, the recognition seems to be entirely unconnected with any of the senses.

It is rather remarkable that though others may have met such cases, I myself have never known an instance where both persons recognised each other simultaneously. Of course it is a matter of common observation with us all that certain smells and sounds evoke a particular memory, but that does not in any way elucidate the fact that the sight of a figure, which you think you see for the first time, should conjure up the *correct* idea of who that person is. The crunching of gravel under wheels always reminds me of the Villa in Italy in which I was born, and I always associate the sound with the assassination of our little hump-backed cook, who was stabbed just outside our gate. I hear that the ghost of this "Gobbo" haunts the Villa to this day !

Space forbids that I should give many more instances of that one incomprehensible faculty of recognising people under circumstances which do not admit of explanation ; but one more may be permitted, where the chance of being right seemed so remote, that it has always struck me as being one of the most singular of my experiences.

I was *Times* Correspondent in the Russo-Turkish War and went up the Danube. When at Sulina, a wretched old man, a native of Dobrudja, was brought before Hobart Pasha as a spy. I can see the miserable old man now, piteously stupid and idiotic, with a blank, hopeless look in his face. With Hobart sat some Turkish officers, naval and military, and amongst them a Turkish Major of Infantry with nothing of any kind remarkable about him. Some weeks later I was at the Shipka with Suleiman's army, and went up one night to witness an assault on the Russian position. It failed, like all the others, in spite of the desperate valour of the Turks, and as I lay behind a fallen tree I saw the shattered remains of the column streaming down into the valley again. I then crawled up from shelter to shelter until I came to where the attack had failed, and the dead lay as thick as leaves in a forest.

Suddenly, I almost stumbled over a body that was lying on its face, half hidden in the bracken, and something within me convinced me it was that of some one I had seen or known. Why that particular body it is impossible to say; but I turned it over, and in the moonlight at once recognised the Major who had sat on the trial of the spy. I learnt afterwards that he was the same man, and had just come up from Constantinople the day before.

I do not attempt any explanation of these things, and I know that many others have experienced the same, and probably many of my readers also. It may be that the photograph on the mind has awaited all these years for development—but even so it is a mystery. It may be telepathy, but telepathy is a mystery. Memory has, in my case, certainly nothing to do with it. I may see a man three times to-day and shall not recognise him in a week's time. In this case we have a man or woman whose form, colour, gait, and most probably their very clothes, are exactly the same, and yet we don't know them again. In the other instances I have given, every single characteristic has changed; the thin man has grown fat, the colour of youth has passed into palid and withered old age, the springing step has given place to a wooden leg.

Put a bit of rosemary into the hand of a dead man, and it will grow and sprout. Can we explain why?

AN IDLER'S IDYLL.

"YES, my dear Marchioness," said the fat little doctor looking benignantly upon me through his gold-rimmed spectacles, and softly rubbing his chubby white hands the while, "absolute quiet and a milder climate without loss of time. Your nervous system——"

"Now, doctor, pray don't tell me anything more about my nervous system. I'm sick of it! Do you think I don't *feel* all that you can *say*?"

My friend gave his usual quiet chuckle.

"There's Ida there," I continued, can tell you that my poor nerves are for ever in a state of vibration, just like—like—what shall I say? just like the strings of my poor Erard, under Signor Pestaforte's performance of the Rapsodie Hongroise."

Ida was my companion, a gentle, pretty creature of good parentage, penniless, and, thanks to the unpardonable caprice of her godfather and godmother, saddled with a name fitter to figure in romance than fight its way through reality.

Who ever heard of an impecunious Ida making anything like a decent settlement in life?

She was quite alone in the world, her mother had died of that all too common malady, a broken heart; and her father, after a life of debauch and consequent wretchedness, had perished in a brawl, rather to the relief of the very few who yet interested themselves in the fallen gentleman.

"And you really order me to leave town?"

"I don't order, madam, I only advise," answered the little man, with a bow which, I suppose, he fancied graceful and I found grotesque.

"Your advice is cruel, doctor. Just think! The prince is to be married at the end of the month, and I shall lose all the *fêtes*."

"If you won't take my advice, Signora Marchesa, I wash my hands of the consequences."

I suppose he was in earnest for he there and then commenced a Barmecide-like process of cleansing his white, well-fed fingers, and that with such wonderful veracity of action that I was upon the point of desiring Ida to go for a towel.

However, he diverted me from my purpose by suddenly ceasing and drawing out his gold snuff-box from the pocket of his expansive and beautifully got-up white waistcoat.

What followed is needless to repeat. Suffice it to say that the very

same afternoon I wrote a letter to a friend at Genoa, in which you might have read the following :

"My tiresome doctor is obstinate, and insists on sending me away for quiet and change. As I never do things by halves, you know, I wish you to lend me your cottage at Vallegrande for a month or two. Perhaps after a few weeks' burial there I may rejoice in a happy resurrection to health and humanity, etc."

The following week I bade adieu to Turin and all its social delights, to set out with Ida and a single maid-servant for a place I had never seen, but which, from description, I felt assured must be neither more nor less than a howling wilderness.

From Genoa to Sestri Levante by rail, from Sestri to Vallegrande by sea. That is, a two hours' coasting in a little open boat smelling suspiciously of firkins and fish, a twilight landing upon a shingly shore, a scramble up a narrow rocky path, and a final fling of my wearied self upon a hard sofa. Such was the fag-end of my tedious journey, and the turning-point from which new life was to start into existence.

I got up early the next morning, not a little curious to see what my place of voluntary banishment was really like, and could not refrain from a cry of wondering delight as I stepped out upon the balcony.

Below me a little terraced garden, a wilderness of dark-leaved orange and lemon trees, trailing vines and rose bushes ; then a broad beach, with here and there a black mass of jagged rock cropping up from out the shining shingle ; beyond, the azure sea dancing merrily in the sunny morning light.

To the right and left high precipitous cliffs shooting boldly up into the blue vault above ; behind, an amphitheatre of steep crags, girt by olive groves, crowned by pine forests ; here aloes bristling out of some capricious crevice ; there a thicket of myrtle or oleander clothing some mimic ravine with a garment of sombre verdure or rosy blossom. Yes, it was beautiful enough to sweep away all remembrance of drawing-room and opera-box, court circle and conversazione.

I went out and descending to the lowest terrace, turned my gaze inland.

Vallegrande was but a gigantic amphitheatre, open to the sea and facing full south, with no land approach save a sort of goat's path leading in capricious zigzags up the steep sides of the encircling hills, or an hour's march through one of the two railway tunnels, whose dark arches I saw to the right and left frowning blackly out from beneath the menacing cliffs by which they were overhung.

And, while I stood there in amicable confabulation with the old peasant, a distant rumble fell upon my ear, and then a train flashed out from the one frowning arch, to be, the next instant, swallowed up by the other, almost ere the shriek of the engine and the wavering wreath of steamy smoke had time to strike the ear and eye of the

beholder. A train of little more than ordinary length would almost have reached from tunnel to tunnel, and overspanned the whole breadth of the gorge-like valley itself.

Close to the mouth of one of the galleries stood the cottage of the railway men; opposite, in the centre of a miniature orchard, perched the low building occupied by the coastguards. These latter—five in number—two railway men and their wives, the old peasant and his family inhabiting the ground-floor of the house where I was quartered, Ida, my maid and myself were the only dwellers within the pine-clad barriers of Vallegrande.

It was a sort of Valley of the Battucas. Provisions were either brought by sea or carried through the tunnel from Moneglia, our post-town, whither one of the guards went every morning to fetch the letters of the whole community.

How I wished I could have set down my little doctor, white hands, gold-rimmed spectacles, patent-leather boots and all, in the midst of the woody wilderness into which he had been the means of despatching me! I must have wandered about for a considerable time, for I began to feel very hungry before returning to the house.

The first thing I saw upon entering my room was Marietta (my maid) sitting in silent tears upon one of my trunks, solacing herself with as fine a fit of sulks as ever a great lady's waiting-woman yet indulged in.

"What on earth is the matter?" I cried, stopping short before her, and wavering between a hearty laugh and an energetic lecture.

"Ah, Signora Marchesa, I never thought, after seven years' faithful service, to have been brought away to such a place as this! It's nothing but a howling desert!"

"My good woman, Jacob served just seven years for Leah, who, I dare say, snubbed him well before a month was over; while you have had most excellent wages and no end of hats and dresses. I can't see you are any way to be pitied. However, if you cannot manage to live without tramways and a hairdresser, perhaps you had better go back. You are quite at liberty to do so."

My speech was accompanied by a staccato of snivels from the elderly maiden, terminating in an: "Ah, Signora Marchesa!"

"You can choose between a chamber over the mountains with the goatherd, and an excursion through the tunnel with one of the coastguards. Always supposing that either be willing to take the charge. I shouldn't advise you to ask them with your present face. As for a boat——"

"Oh, Signora Marchesa!"

"There, that will do. Go to your room and think it over. And meanwhile send Miss Ida to me."

Exit Abigail and enter Ida with the freshest of cheeks and a charming duo of smile and cheery greeting. It was like a sudden transit from nipping frost to the genial warmth of summer sunshine

—my own sudden transfer from the fogs of Turin to the sun-steeped shores of the Mediterranean.

"Well, Ida, what do you think of it?"

"I was never so delighted in all my life! Everything is so beautiful and fresh!"

"Yes, like my own appetite. Do you think there's any hope of getting something to eat?"

She rippled over in an assuring little laugh as she rose and opened the door leading to the landing. The grateful odours of coffee and hot bread floated up from some unexplored region below.

"As I came in I saw Carlotta—she's the old peasant's wife, you know: I have been out ever since daylight and have made acquaintance with them all—and her daughter—*her* name is Lucia—busy preparing breakfast. She was once cook in the old Marquis's family, she told me, so there is no fear."

"Yes, so my friend wrote. But I——"

Here came a knock at the door, and the next moment Lucia, a tall, unpleasant-looking girl of about twenty, appeared with a tray the sight and smell of which did my very heart good. Never had I drunk such coffee, never dreamed of such milk, never imagined a hot cake such as was set before me! And Ida, too, did full justice to the meal.

Had Lucia been capable of astonishment she must have wondered at the miraculous disappearance of the good things on her coming to clear away. But I don't suppose she was, for her acid face underwent no change, and she left as she had entered the room—mute and misanthropic as a fish.

On returning to my bed-chamber I found Marietta busy unpacking. She had taken wit in her woe, and was now doing her best to conciliate me by a sudden overflow of zeal for my comfort. It was all one to me: I only kept her on from habit and an antipathy to new faces.

"Please, my lady, there is no bell from this room to mine. If your ladyship should want me during the night——"

This to make me understand that she had no intention of quitting. She never *could* speak out boldly, but always took to beating about the bush.

"Bell!" I answered. "Why not a telephone at once? I don't suppose they know the use of bells here save to tie to a goat's neck. I can do quite well without, for that matter. Give me a pair of strong shoes and the largest parasol you can find. Yes—that will do."

Taking a book, I sallied forth upon further explorations; leaving Ida to her own devices as was my custom. My idea of a companion was one to sit with me at meals, dress prettily, look pleasant, and finish all the endless bits of embroidery I so thoughtlessly undertook. Nothing more.

Up one stony track, down another, now crushing through a thicket of myrtle, now pausing beneath the shade of a broad-boughed pine. On I went, marvelling at nothing so much as my own self and my new-born energy. I could scarcely believe I was the same woman who, at Turin, could never stir out except in a carriage, and who deemed it one of the bores of existence to take a ten minutes' walk. At last, by dint of scrambling and at the expense of a torn skirt, I managed to reach a little rocky platform, overhanging the sea and pleasantly screened from the sun by the beetling cliff above.

Here I rested, gazing down wonderingly at the clear green water, so pure and limpid that the fish were plainly visible, now gliding hither and thither, crossing and re-crossing, now suddenly darting away in every direction to unite, the moment after, in a compact shoal—their shadows now playing across the patches of yellow sand, now lost to view among the rocky masses scattered over the bed of the slumbering waters. Not a weed—not an impurity—only the pale green gradually deepening in hue till lost amid the blue bands of the mysterious abyss.

To the left and right, the bold cliffs framing in the waters, as it were, and defining themselves sharply against the scarcely bluer sky—in the distance a fishing-boat with flapping sail lying idly on the waters—on the horizon a faint line of smoke marking the track of a passing steamer.

I say nothing of the flood of light pouring broadly down upon all with vivifying power—of the perfume of the pine and a thousand aromatic herbs mingling with the acrid odour of brine—the call of the blackcap from the thick myrtles—the floating of the golden butterfly upon the sun-steeped air—the hum of the bee amid the rosemary and thyme—for who can describe them? But I *will* say that I felt as if I had suddenly flung off a dozen years of my weary life, and in my heart of hearts I thanked the bland-browed little doctor who had, all unconsciously, thus opened a source of new and unbounded enjoyment to one for whom the spring of existence was already beginning to run dry.

A dozen years of life! Yes. And yet, dear reader, I am not an old woman even now. I was but twenty-eight when at Valleggrande—that is, in years, for I was already terribly aged in the ways of the weary world. I had never been a child, for circumstances and my parents' mistaken fondness had even deprived me of the companionship of children.

I don't blame them—they thought they were doing well; but through life I have felt how unjust they were in their loving ignorance.

The spring of life is necessary to produce a fruitful summer.

My father was an officer, my mother a court lady. At ten years of age I had almost the manners and much of the parlance of a girl of twenty; I was already cited as a miracle of tact and accomplishments—I knew myself to be a beauty.

I don't believe any female, unless an actual idiot, was ever yet ignorant of her own charms. Romances may say what they will; my own observation has never failed to show me that, while a plain girl may sometimes happily succeed in believing herself attractive, a pretty one was never yet insensible to the tale her own glass or the first pool of water would be ever ready to whisper.

Let a woman have tact to hide her consciousness of beauty—but, if blind to the gift, I certainly say she does not deserve its possession.

I was married at seventeen. One of those unions made by papas and mammas with the help of the family lawyer. Perhaps, had my husband lived I should have learned to love him, for he was kind and attentive, generous and brave, and I might have forgotten the five-and-twenty years' difference of age between us. But he died within two years of our marriage, leaving me a childless widow, the uncontrolled mistress of an enormous fortune, and possessor of a heart that had never known the throb of true affection.

Suitors without number now appeared on the scene, as you can well imagine, but they were adorers of my rent-roll rather than of myself. Not one was single-hearted, or sincere in his protestations. And I scrutinised keenly, for I sadly felt the need of someone to love and lean upon.

It was strange—— beautiful, young, free and wealthy, I sought in vain for one, who, in exchange for all, would give me affection.

But no, I am wrong, it was *not* strange. In the artificial glare of fashionable life in which I lived, there was no cool shady spot in which love could take root and flourish.

There were moments in which I would have given all to have shared the heart and home of a peasant! And how many secret hours of weary heart-sickness amid all that flush of grandeur and glitter?

Matrimony without love did not tempt me; so-called love without marriage I scorned. And thus time wore on and forced me to take refuge in one of the usual solaces open to women whose lives are unfilled by the cares and delights of domestic duty.

I had no taste for bigotry, no vocation for either teaching or nursing; I took to nerves and a fashionable physician, and cried, "Wolf! Wolf!" so perseveringly that at last he came, and I found myself, if not seriously unwell, at least in a state sufficiently removed from mental as well as bodily health. The petty excitements of a continual round of fashionable folly rendered repose necessary, if not desirable.

I was recalled from my reveries by the sound of a voice on the beach below shouting, "*Miseria! Miseria!*" and, looking over the edge of the rock upon which I was sitting, saw old Michele the peasant, a stout stick in one hand, shading his eyes from the sun with the other, gazing across at the low jagged rocks which bounded the

strand at its other extremity. "Miseria! Miseria!" he repeated. The cry awoke the echoes slumbering in the hollows of the dark cliffs overhead—a large bird scared from its retreat, fluttered forth with a loud shriek, and flew circling away. At the same instant a lad leaped down from the rocky barrier, hesitated a moment, and then slowly approached the old peasant.

"Ah, you son of mischief!" cried the latter raising his stick with a menacing air; "is there never anything good then to be got out of you, you idle vagabond?"

The boy had halted within a few yards of the old man, whom I could hardly recognise for the same demure, respectful personage who had been doing the honours of the premises to me only a few hours earlier.

"What are you doing down there among the rocks, you good-for-nothing? And where are the goats? I'll break every bone in your wretched body, that I will," shrieked Michele making a bound towards the unhappy boy.

But a sonorous "Halt there!" caused him to stop and turn; the stick he had so menacingly brandished was quickly lowered.

One of the coastguards appeared upon the scene. A tall, stalwart, and, as far as I could make out, young fellow, black haired, and dressed in his dark green uniform with cutlass and cartouch box. He was evidently on duty.

"What are you going to beat Miseria for?" he asked, and his clear, manly voice rang out upon the pure air so that every inflection even reached me where I was sitting.

"Why, you see, sir, the young rascal has just let the goats run wild to come and idle away his time down here among the rocks. I never can get an hour's work out of him—he's as lazy as sin, and he'd eat me and mine out of house and home if Lucia were not there to keep things together with a careful hand. Ah, sir, there's not a girl within twenty miles round that can manage a house as Lucia can. She's the pearl of daughters, though it's her father who says so. As for Miseria there, he's a regular vagabond, that he is!"

"Perhaps so, but anyhow you shall not lay a hand on him if I can help it, and——"

"Padronissimo, Signor Carlo, padronissimo. Lucia always says that il Signor Carlo always does and says just what is right. Ah, she is a smart girl, that Lucia of mine, and happy the man who gets her—to say nothing of the little sack of scudi that——"

"Yes, yes, I'm quite sure of it, and I wish her a good husband with all my heart. Look, there she is watching us from the terrace; she may be wanting you; you had better go back. I'll see that Miseria returns to his goats. Come, lad!"

Putting his arm over the terrified boy's shoulder he led him away.

Michele watched them for a moment, took out his blue handkerchief, mopped his brow, shook his head dubiously, and then, after

brandishing his enormous fist at the retreating pair, turned slowly towards the house.

When, an hour later, I passed him in the garden, he took off his red woollen cap to me with a smile as sweet as his "*riverita, Signora Marchesa*," was servile.

I suppose the somebody who said that all peasants are born hypocrites was not far wrong.

By the end of the first week I had begun to wonder how I had ever been able to live anywhere but at Valleggrande; by the middle of the second I had got so far as to accuse Providence of an unpardonable mistake in not having caused me to be born in a hovel. Goat's milk and polenta was such delicious food; and, I suppose, I forgot all about the numberless other dainties which, at the price of heaven knows what inconvenience to others, were weekly forwarded from Genoa for my use.

I was in the open air all the day long, pottering about the little farmyard and garden for hours—to, I daresay, the utter discomfort of all therein concerned—or else scrambling amid the craggy heights, exploring each sequestered nook, penetrating every mysterious ravine.

I read Michelet, and he taught me to open my eyes and look at things as I had never looked before. A thousand voices hitherto unheard broke upon my wondering ear, a thousand sights, never yet dreamed of, even, manifested themselves to my delighted gaze. My hourly conclusion was, that the dwellers in great cities were terribly to be pitied.

Naturally, like all new converts, I "out-Heroded Herod." I would buy Valleggrande and spend my remaining life—improving here, projecting there; I would—well, never mind what I would. I now smile as I recall it all, sitting in my blue satin boudoir, a score of invitations lying upon the table, and a box of Paris dresses unpacking in the hall.

One nook had greatly taken my fancy; a tiny dell horribly difficult of access, but amply repaying any amount of scratched hands and torn skirts. Had there been fairies in Italy I am sure I should have found them there.

An old well with a low, fern-clad stone wall, in the centre of a carpet of the softest, thickest grass; all around the fragrant pines towering up, up, up to the highest ridge above, and framing-in a patch of the deep blue sky with their feathery fringe. A very paradise of soft, subdued light and refreshing coolness, even during the hottest hours of the day.

There I sat, one cloudless afternoon, leaning against the crumbling old well wall, enjoying the cool contact with the fresh ferns and maiden-hair moss, dreaming with half-closed eyes, and a volume of Georges Sand and my parasol on the grass beside me.

Not a sound—not a breath—the warm, perfumed air slept as if a

spell were upon all nature. I yielded to the torpor gradually stealing over me and fell asleep.

A step crashing down the steep descent woke me with a start. The next moment a coastguard, carabine in hand, burst through the thick pines and halted abruptly with a smothered exclamation of surprise.

I at once recognised him. It was he who had saved poor Miseria from Michele's tender mercies. He turned red as fire, took off his cap and, murmuring some unconnected words of excuse, was about to turn away. I stopped him. I don't remember what I said, but I pointed to a large moss-covered stone at a little distance and just opposite to where I was lying. He obeyed and sat down, keeping his yellow laced cap in his hand.

I wish you, dear L——, with your painter's eye, could have seen him. Tall, and with a form such as sculptors dream of, hands and feet like those of a prince-royal, a pure oval face, large dark eyes, slightly aquiline nose, full red lips displaying teeth like pearls, a silky moustache, short black hair curling crisply down to the very nape of the muscular neck, a somewhat dark skin warmly dyed by the young, healthful blood beneath—such was my *vis-à-vis* the coast-guard, as, bare-headed, he sat there beneath the feathery pine, clad in his dark green uniform and with his carabine lying carelessly across his knees.

Lucia's taste is not a bad one, I murmured to myself.

Then I thought what an effect he would produce could I transport him then and there into the thick of one of our Turin assemblies; and then I——

When I began to write I promised myself to be sincere and shirk nothing; so I am forced to reveal my second thought and incur your lifting up your hands and eyes to heaven in horror and dismay and ejaculating "Abominable woman!"

My second thought was, then, that I would have given a great deal to have been able to have kissed him—not on his red, ripe lips, but precisely upon the nape of that royal neck of his, just where the little black curls softened into down and lost themselves in the rich, warm hue of the velvety skin.

There! I know it was very wrong; and yet, after all, it was not my fault. Neither you nor I can help the impish thoughts that, from time to time, assail us; let us only be thankful that we don't obey them.

And I *didn't* kiss him; so you can read on without risk, if it so please you.

On the contrary, I asked him as quietly as if I had spent half my life *tête-à-tête* with handsome coastguards amid the solitude of interminable pine woods: "Are you on service to-day?"

"No, Signora Marchesa, it is a free day with me. I came out to see if I could manage to come across an eagle; the young lady with

you said the other day she would like to have some of the feathers, and being thirsty, I came down——”

“Ah, yes, I remember her telling me something about it.”

“And Miseria had seen——”

“Ah, by the way, who *is* Miseria, and what is the meaning of that dreadful name?”

“Oh, he is a poor devil whom everybody thinks he has a right to ill-treat. I suppose because he has no one in the wide world to stick up for him.”

“But I saw you stand up for him one morning when Michele was going to beat him.”

He reddened, and then with the softest smile I ever saw upon a man's face, and with the simplest expression replied: “Ah, if it depended upon me they should never touch a hair of his head.”

“But who and what is he?”

“Nobody knows. Years ago—I was not here then—old Carlotta going out for wood one morning at daybreak, found a dead woman and a live baby lying under a pine-tree. The mother must have died of cold and want; the doctor said she did; the baby is now Miseria. Michele christened him so. I suppose he *has* another name, but nobody knows it. Carlotta took care of him, and the old marchese, the father of the present one, used to send a little money now and then—I daresay he would have done something for the lad if he had lived, but——”

“And the present landlord?”

“He, signora, has not set foot in the place for years!”

“Is Miseria really the idle good-for-nothing Michele calls him?”

“Not a bit of it. It's the hard words that spoil him. He'll do anything if you treat him kindly.”

How many, thought I, are there in the world just like him.

“Is Michele a bad man?”

“Not worse than the rest of the peasants about here.”

“But you, you are not from these parts?”

“Oh no, signora, I am from Pietra Santa—close to Lucca, you know.”

“A Tuscan, then?”

“Si, signora.”

“I have been to Lucca, I——”

The words died upon my lips and every drop of blood within me seemed to freeze—had my hair been short like a man's it would have stood on end, for I felt my scalp quiver as if under the influence of galvanism. Something cold, and oh, so inexpressibly horrible, was slowly crawling on to my neck from out the crushed ferns against which I was reclining, noiselessly, cautiously, gradually insinuating itself under my fichu. I could not see it, but I *felt* it to be a serpent. Probably a viper! I could never look at a poor innocent blind worm even without feeling my flesh creep, and now! Voice

and motion were paralysed. I could only sit there as one spell-bound, my eyes fixed in mute agony upon my companion. He must have thought me suddenly seized with some sort of fit, for he started up in anxious surprise and made a step forward. But only one! Then he stopped short. Something gleaming out from among the ferns just above my left shoulder had caught his quick eye.

"For pity's sake don't move! There is no danger if you can remain still!"

His own face had grown ashy pale. I never took my eyes off his, never moved a muscle. And yet all the while I felt the cold clammy reptile gliding slowly across my throat. If it should manage to creep down the neck of my dress! Fortunately it fitted tight and was not cut low. I seemed to be enduring hours of agony. I saw my companion stoop slowly and stealthily to pick up a stick lying at his feet.

"Get ready to spring up the moment I tell you," he whispered hoarsely.

I felt the last clammy touch fall away from my shuddering skin, and was conscious of the beast hanging heavily down along my arm. A faint rustle among the leaves and grass beside me—a cry of "Now, quick!" and with one bound I was on my feet and in safety.

A heavy thud, an exclamation of triumph, and then my companion held up the writhing reptile to my horror-stricken gaze.

A deadly sickness came over me, and I was obliged to grasp at a near branch for support. The coast-guard caught me in his strong arms just as I was falling, and carried me to the mossy seat he had been occupying. I didn't faint; I only closed my eyes and rested my head upon his broad breast.

"Sta meglio, Signora Marchesa?" he asked in a low soft voice.

I answered by a flood of tears. They relieved me so effectually that, half an hour later, I was outwardly quite myself again. I rose.

We stood face to face, his eyes looking down straight into mine. I had never felt my heart beat as it beat during that brief moment. A single movement on his part and my arms would have been round his neck. But he stood there in respectful silence, manly deference and expectant obedience, with those eyes of his, the first whose light had ever reached the heart of Marie Altamonte.

"What is your name?" I asked with a sudden recovery of my usual self-possession.

"Carlo Evangelisti, signora."

I gave him my hand, which he took timidly and immediately let fall, reddening to the temples as he did so.

"Well, Carlo Evangelisti, remember you have a friend in the Marchesa Altamonte. Now please show me the nearest way home."

We scarcely exchanged a dozen words as we scrambled on. Our hands clasped each other as he helped me across some difficult pass; he held impeding branches aside and once knelt to rescue my skirts from

an impertinent bramble ; in fact he did all that any of the dukes and counts of my acquaintance would have done. But not one of them would have done it as he did. There was a nerve in his arm, a thrill in the firm clasp of his hand, an unerring security in the tread of his foot that was new to me. I felt subdued, utterly mastered, under a spell. And I acknowledged to a sense of rapture in my sudden subjugation. I who had once coolly ignored the two fingers patronisingly extended to me by a German Royal Highness at a glittering reception, would have humbly knelt and unlaced Carlo's boots there and then had he bid me do it.

But I kept it all carefully to myself. I even avoided looking at him ; which, I dare say, he attributed to his having that horrid dead reptile slung over his left arm. He intended flaying it, he said ; and in his simplicity asked me if I would like to have the skin for a remembrance.

As if I had not already my remembrance—not a dead serpent, but a living one writhing within my own hitherto peaceful bosom.

The day had been menacing. Cloudy and hot, with a mysterious stillness in the air weighing like a pall upon man and beast. The sea voiceless yet heaving, with some unknown power darkly at work within its secret depths—a sullen swell without wave or ripple breaking the leaden expanse. Only from time to time a weird voice broke forth—none knew whence—to cease ere fully caught, and then again all Nature resumed her silent watch for the herald of the storm to ride abroad and make his presence known.

I was feverish and restless, weary in body and mind ; and sick of seeking a repose that seemed fled as if for ever, I left the house, and wandered down through the little garden to take refuge in the vine-wreathed arbour upon the lower terrace.

Immediately below me began the beach, and close under the wall stood a bench, generally occupied on fine evenings by some of the men about the place. This time, too, it was so, for a voice caught my ear, and made my heart give a bound as if to leap forth and join the speaker's.

It was Carlo who had spoken. I had seen him but rarely since our adventure by the well, and never alone—though it only depended upon myself to do so. Therefore, you see, my dear L——, that also in this case, the devil was not so black as perhaps he was painted. Devil is a dreadful word for your English eyes and ears, is it not ? You must be indulgent, however, and remember that it is an every-day name with us here. Perhaps we are more intimate with him than you are. Who knows ?

I remember, years ago, when Queen Victoria was at Baveno one day, when explaining a fresco to her Majesty and Princess Beatrice, the little Prefect of Pallanza said : "And those are the devils issuing from the woman's body," upon which the two royal ladies broke

into laughter that did one's very heart good. Ask Lady C. to tell you all about it.

Well, it was Carlo's voice that called forth a : "Do you think then she will refuse to hear you, and send you about your business?" in response.

"I fear so."

"Well, I don't know what to advise you."

"Just think what a terrible difference there is in our positions. I a poor coastguard with nothing in the wide world, she a born lady——"

"And yet you think she loves you?"

"I do, Renzo; though you are the only one in the world to whom I would say so."

"Carlo, you once saved my life when not one of the rest of them would risk coming to my aid. But for you I should have been food for the fishes long and long ago. You know well that you can trust anything to me."

"I know it. Well, though no word of love has ever passed our lips, I am sure she loves me. I have read it in her eyes. It was only yesterday as I crossed the court to deliver the letters, and she was standing at the window. What noise was that?"

"A bird in the branches overhead."

It was no bird; my involuntary movement had set the leaves rustling. Yes, it was true, I had been standing with Ida at the window as Carlo passed. He had doffed his cap, and I had returned his greeting. That was all. And so he had read my secret? And I had accused him of blindness!

"And your love for her——"

"Is such as I never even dreamed of. It is my first. Ah, Renzo, I was born to be wretched all my life!"

If it was no bird that once more set the leaves rustling, it was the trembling hand of a being that felt as if wings had been suddenly vouchsafed her. I was suffocating with emotion.

"Yes, born to be wretched," repeated Carlo.

"My poor friend!"

"Ill-treated by my stepmother, beaten by my father, half-starved by both, I was forced, I may say, to run away from home when yet a boy. And what has my life been till now? Solitude and suffering, not a hand to turn to, not a heart to lean upon in all the wide world. Ah, you all wonder at my taking Miseria's part. I do it because I have felt what he must feel, suffered what he suffers."

"Carlo, you are a noble fellow!"

"And now that chance—for what but the purest chance could bring two ladies to such an out-of-the-way place as this?—has sent me a being to love me and to love, rank and position oblige me to be silent and smother my sufferings in my own heart."

"Come, come, don't give way, man. There is nothing to make you despair. On the contrary, you should hope——"

"Hope? What have I to hope? Do ladies marry coastguards in your part of the world, perhaps?"

"Carlo, mio, love makes ladies do stranger things than that, sometimes. I remember——"

"Ah, be silent. I tell you there is no hope."

"Is she rich?"

"What do I know! Would she were as poor as Miseria there, that I might work for her from morning till night."

"*Corbezzoli!* You are indeed far gone, my poor fellow!"

"I know I have a hell here in my heart, that, spite of all, I would not exchange for anything you could offer me. But there, it's six o'clock, and I must be off."

"Are you on guard?"

"Yes, on the mountain."

"All night?"

"Till six to-morrow."

"There's ugly weather brewing!"

"Yes—it seems so. Good-night."

I heard the crunch of steps upon the sandy shingle, and, after listening to the sounds till they died away, I buried my face in my hands, and tried to think calmly over what I had just heard.

Prudence proposed immediate departure, worldly wisdom whispered its warning, common sense clamoured loudly for a hearing, but love laid his finger upon my heart, and smiling up into my face, said: "Remain." I obeyed him.

I have often been taxed with never doing things like other people, and more than once accused of doing things that none but the very few would ever think of doing at all; so you must not be surprised when I tell you that I began to call to mind the histories of all the women whom I had ever known or heard of, who had made matches such as the one which was beginning faintly to define itself upon the horizon of my life.

There was one Royal Duchess who had married a sort of head groom, who had been exiled to Switzerland, and was there brutally beaten by her husband every time anything went wrong in the stables, or he lost at play. The Marchioness of —, who set all London talking by espousing a "young man" from Marshall and Snelgrove's. Lady —, who fell in love with an American adventurer, "grown up nowhere," married him, and awoke to find herself the laughing-stock of all her friends during the few short months she was spared to this wicked world. These, and a dozen more rose to memory, and not one gave me the result I looked for.

And yet, and yet, and yet——

Ah, if Carlo had only been by my side that I might have lain my head upon his shoulder and whispered that I loved him.

The big drops came pattering down, and the faint growl of thunder was heard in the distance.

Though yet early it was already growing dark, so menacing was the sky, and the sea looked black as it sullenly heaved under the brooding gloom.

The drops ceased and then came a lull, followed by a sudden blast of cold air rushing upwards, and causing the pines to writhe and lament as if in terror at the coming torture.

Silence once more, a second discharge of enormous drops, a nearer roll of thunder, this time accompanied by a vivid flash.

With a shiver I drew my thin scarf round me and hurried to the house. The storm was terrific, though of short duration, and when I awoke on the following morning the sun was shining brightly in a sky of cloudless blue.

"The beach looks quite gay," I said to Ida as we stood upon the balcony watching the azure waves dancing and gleaming in the golden light: "three coast-guards and the two railway-men, Michele—and there comes Carlotta! I hope she is not going to leave our breakfast to the tender mercies of that vinegar-faced daughter of hers!"

"What are they all speaking about so eagerly? Look, there is the brigadier pointing up to the crags. There must be smugglers abroad. See, there they are going off in all directions."

"But *are* smugglers ever seen here in this out-of-the-way place?"

"Oh, yes. It was only two months ago that they tried to run a cargo."

"My dear, who told you——"

But I neither finished my question nor waited for answer; for just at that moment, Miseria bounded out from the low rocks, rushed frantically across the beach crying in tones that rang out a very wail of wild agony upon the peaceful scene: "E morto, ohè morto, Signor Brigadiere," and flung himself in a burst of uncontrollable grief at the feet of the horror-stricken official.

I uttered no cry, though my heart seemed to die within me as the dreadful truth flashed upon my mind; I rushed silently from the room.

There, amid those cruel, jagged rocks, lay my Carlo, his beautiful face white and stony and no light in the half-closed eyes, his short thick curls all matted with blood, one leg doubled up under him, his uniform muddy and torn. Clenched in one hand was a tuft of grass torn up by the roots, the other lay upon his breast.

With what agony of heart did I fling myself upon my knees beside him. What did I care for those standing around with wondering, awestricken faces?

"Carlo! Carlo!"

Not a breath, not a sound. The dull, half-closed eyes remained fixed as before, the white lips rigid and motionless.

I seized his hand in both mine; it was stiff and icy, dead to the wild pressure of my grief.

"A doctor, a doctor!" I cried frantically, looking up; "fetch a doctor, for mercy's sake!"

"But what's the use, signora? You see he is dead," said one of the railwaymen. Carlo's companions were sobbing like children.

"Fetch a doctor!" I repeated.

"It's ten francs a visit," objected one of the women.

"And were it ten thousand," I cried. There was a whispering, and then one of the men started off.

"Carlo, Carlo!" And in my anguish I bent yet lower over the face whose beauty not even death itself could mar.

There was a movement among the bystanders, a piercing shriek, and Ida fell senseless into the arms stretched out to save her.

Of all that passed during the next few hours I have but a confused and vague recollection. The doctor came at last, and when, after an examination that was an eternity of suspense to me, he finally came forth from the room into which I had had Carlo conveyed and entered mine, he found me pacing up and down in repressed anguish and excitement, awaiting the fiat he might have to pronounce, and in a state of agitation too great to allow of my uttering a single word of inquiry.

I could only stop short before him. He understood me, however.

"The case is a bad one," he began, "but with care——"

I fell rather than sank upon a chair and cried as I had never yet cried.

"Calm yourself, signora; you will make yourself ill. There now. Yes, the fall over those cliffs was a bad one. It's a miracle that he wasn't dashed to atoms! A few metres further on, and—well, it was madness to attempt that path after the rain!"

"But there is hope, you say?"

"Yes, madame, I can give you hope, but no assurance, remember. He has much in his favour—youth, a good constitution—and I am sure he will have every care——"

I assented.

"The fracture in the leg is a terrible one, and I cannot yet say if it will not be necessary to——"

He hesitated.

"To what?" I asked, looking up.

"To amputate."

"What matter, if his life is saved?"

"What matter?" repeated the doctor in amaze. "Don't you know that the poor young fellow has but his labour to depend on, and that if——"

"There is no question of that," I interrupted. "You, doctor, will of course remain here."

He looked at me wonderingly.

"Remain here?"

"Yes, yes. Do you suppose I could rest, knowing that medical aid was so far off?"

"Far enough indeed. But who——?"

"Listen, doctor"—and I was the great lady once more—"let us understand each other clearly. Any and every expense is at my charge. I do not care what it may cost, but I require sure and unremitting medical attendance. Are you willing to undertake it?"

He hesitated.

"Wait a moment," I cried, suddenly remembering that I was not at Turin, with a palazzo of my own and a high social position, but a stranger woman in a land of boors: "wait a moment." And opening my desk I took out a note of a thousand francs and placed it in his hand. "There, that for the present. Now have the goodness to tell me all the arrangements to be made."

He obeyed like a lamb. After a short return to Moneglia to provide everything that was necessary, and adjust matters with his patients there, he returned to take up his abode for an indefinite period of time at Valleggrande.

The house was a regular hospital with a resident doctor.

Carlo slowly rallied; the fracture, though a very bad one, was not such as to necessitate amputation, and heaven knows how carefully I watched over him! I who had so often expressed heartless antipathy to the vocation of a sick-nurse!

He lay in a room opposite mine, and I used to listen breathlessly to every movement, strive to catch and interpret every sigh. How I rejoiced in being rich, and able thus, in spite of distance and difficulty, to have everything that art could indicate or affection devise.

Ida had received such a shock from the sudden sight of the accident that fever had set in, and she, too, was confined to her bed; while Mariette had discovered this the most fitting moment in which to invent a sprained ankle and lay up, thus indulging in a little sweet revenge and avoiding any possible over-work that might have fallen to her share. But I soon set things right. I had a hospital nurse over from Genova, organised a regular supply of ice and other requisites, hired a couple of good-tempered, active women from Moneglia, and then, only then, found leisure to think over the eventful past and speculate upon the possible future.

I was lucky in my doctor, for he was evidently clever, though of course like all the Genovese. I had every care for his comfort, but, at the same time, avoided him as much as my situation of hostess allowed.

My greatest and best ally was poor Miseria. For a few francs I bought his services from old Michele, and so had him entirely at my own disposal. His devotion to Carlo was beyond everything.

"He is the only one besides yourself, signora," he said to me one day, "who ever was kind to me."

"And Carlotta?"

"Oh, Carlotta does what she can, but she's afraid of Michele and Lucia."

I had guessed as much.

"And you are very fond of Carlo?"

"Ah, madame, I would give my life—not that it's worth much, but it is all I have to give—for Carlo any day. But everybody loves him, he is so kind and brave. He wouldn't fling a hard word at a dog, that he wouldn't."

Those words secured Misera's future, upon which, however, I had already meditated more than once.

I was sitting by Carlo's bedside. All fever had left him—it was weeks after the accident—and there he lay, the once strong man, feeble now, and helpless as a child; gentle and submissive so as fully to merit the nurse's oft-repeated epithet of a "model patient." His hands, now pale and shrunken, lay outside the clothes, and his soft dark eyes were earnestly fixed upon me whilst I stirred the lemonade I had just prepared for him.

Suddenly those eyes filled, and two large tears rolled slowly down his pallid cheeks.

"Carlo, what is the matter?" I asked, setting down the glass. "Are you worse?"

He shook his head, for he could not speak, and made a motion to take my hand. I laid it unhesitatingly within both his.

"Carlo," I whispered, and voice and heart trembled as I spoke—"Carlo, you must not agitate yourself—you are too weak yet. Come, drink this." And with my disengaged hand I took the glass from the little table at my side.

He obeyed, and then sank back once more.

"It is weak and foolish of me, I know," he murmured, "but I cannot help it." The big tears trickled yet faster as he spoke. Then after a pause: "How can I ever thank you for——"

"Thank me, Carlo! There is surely no need of thanks. I have only done what you would have done in my place. I—I——" I was forced to stop, for I felt my own tears ready to break forth.

He slightly pressed the hand he had never relinquished, and then, after a moment's hesitation, timidly raised it to his lips.

"Carlo!" I murmured. I closed my eyes, and, for a moment, my head swam. Slowly I leaned towards him, and the next instant my lips would have touched his brow. Yes, fling down the book if you will. I repeat it—my lips would have touched his brow if steps had not been heard in the corridor. The nurse, followed by Ida, appeared upon the threshold of the open door.

I cannot tell you if the interruption was welcome or not, such was the mingled emotion to which I was a prey. I made no attempt, however, to withdraw my hand, and merely looked quietly up at the two as I bidden enter.

"Ah, Signor Carlo," exclaimed the nurse as she stepped to the bedside, "what do I see? Tears! That must not be; and I must scold the Signora Marchesa for not fulfilling her duty. Come, cheer up; here is a young lady waiting to inquire after you."

Ida was standing on the other side of the Sister, and hidden from my view. I, however, saw her hand timidly stretched out and then suddenly withdrawn. I suppose she caught sight of mine as it lay there, to all appearance forgotten, within Carlo's feeble clasp. I cannot tell why, but a sharp and sudden pang shot through my heart. My hitherto passive fingers tightened round those of Carlo.

"Do you feel inclined for your broth?" asked the nurse. "It is close upon the hour."

That evening, alone in my own room, I held long and serious council with myself. Lying back in one of the low, comfortable lounging chairs I had had sent over from Genoa, I carefully reviewed the past and tried to map out the future.

Through the widely-opened window I caught a glimpse of the quiet sea gleaming softly in the young moonlight, while beside me stood my writing-table, the carefully-shaded lamp throwing its yellow light upon a heap of letters and papers. The latter were full of the royal marriage which had just taken place, and Turin was in all the excitement of festival and *fête*; while my letters ran over with all sorts of particulars, each epistle terminating with condolences at my being deprived of my share of the gay doings.

I had not read all these kind things without emotion; but I fancy it was not exactly of the kind the writers had charitably hoped to awaken. I felt no sort of regret; only a great deal of satisfaction at being spared the fatigue, mingled with much wonder at having ever been able to find delight in similar gatherings.

No one knew anything of what was going on at Valleggrande. Everybody thought—that is, if they thought about me at all—that I was vegetating there, materially and morally—perhaps even nourishing my infirmities of body and mind with goat's milk and goody books. I had never written a syllable to my friends calculated in any way to dispel the illusion. For, truth to say, I was not *quite* sure whether I *had* any friends. Mine is not a character to win such. I would not hesitate a moment starting for the Antipodes to do a real service to any one; but small sacrifices are quite out of my line.

I feel and acknowledge how wrong I am, and how utterly untrue to my own principle of always judging people by trifles. One has daily opportunities of rendering small services, while the occasions of conferring weighty favours are few and far between. Had I been judged by my own rule, I must have been found wanting to a terrible degree.

None of my dear friends, therefore, really knew anything about me or my life at Valleggrande. My little 'octor less than all, perhaps.

What would he have said could he have known that one hour of my life there was more pregnant with real emotion than a whole year at Turin had ever been? He had ordered "quiet," and I was thriving visibly upon just the reverse.

"Well, he'll know it when I return," I murmured to myself. "If I ever *do* return," I added, after a pause. For I had determined upon speaking plainly to Carlo as soon as he should be a little stronger, and then—— Well, I myself did not know. Circumstances would decide all.

But days rolled on and lengthened into weeks. Doctor and nurse were gone, Carlo was fast getting well, and, as yet, no word of love or explanation had passed our lips. Our situation was such a peculiar one—the order of things was so reversed, that it fell to me to be the first to speak and put an end to the false position into which we had glided. Opportunity was not wanting, and even had it been so I could easily have procured it.

"To-morrow," I would say to myself. To-morrow came, bloomed into to-day, and faded into the past, and yet the words were unspoken. Words that were to decide his future life and mine. Was it womanly reserve? I think not, for I saw no shame in confessing my love to a man who I was certain loved me but whose position forbade his speaking. The world had never given me any real happiness, and now that happiness was within my grasp was I to allow its stupid conventionalities to debar my seizing upon it? I was not going to ask the world to marry me, and if Carlo were content, nobody had any right to cavil.

And I have always found that Mrs. Grundy resembles a nettle in more things than one; grasp her boldly and she won't sting.

I believe, however, that the real reason of my delay was the feeling of my own individual happiness. Education had made me a well-bred egoist, and I felt so happy in a position which instinct told me could never be bettered, that I shrank from doing aught to trouble the gently flowing current of my life.

But I said also to myself that this state of things could not go on much longer. Carlo was rapidly improving in health, and as rapidly relapsing into his early shyness. The gulf between us, which I had fondly hoped was insensibly vanishing, began all at once to widen alarmingly without my being able to assign any reasonable cause for its doing so.

Carlo's ever-respectful manner took a tinge of timid deference which surprised as much as it grieved me. He would no longer ask me to hand him anything he might happen to want, and the words "Signora Marchesa" were now much too frequently upon his lips.

I had come in from the garden and gone straight up into the sitting-room where Carlo was, as usual, lying upon his broad, low sofa.

The day was warm, and, flinging down my hat, I took a chair at his side with my back turned towards the widely-opened French window leading to the balcony. The light fell upon his face, and I rejoiced to see the rich, warm tint once more beginning to show itself upon cheek and lips.

"How well you are looking to-day!" I said; "you have quite a colour!"

As I spoke the flush deepened, and an embarrassed smile flickered over his features. He looked nervous and uncomfortable, with that unmistakable air of one who, having something to say, does not know how to begin.

"Have you been reading? There is a fresh box of books come. But what is the matter with you?" I asked, laughing. "You look as if you had been guilty of some dreadful crime. What is it?"

"Nothing—nothing—I——"

"You have been eating something that you ought not even to have looked at. Come, tell me what it is, and I will see if I can absolve you."

If he was flushed before he was crimson now.

I looked round the room; not a plate—not a glass—no trace of anything. Only a heap of papers and a volume of Guerazzi.

"You must have been conniving with smugglers; I shall have to report you to the minister of finance—that is, the doctor. It's just his day to-morrow."

"Ah, Signora Marchesa, I have something to—to tell you—I have long—that is—I—but——"

"But what?" I asked with beating heart.

"I dare not," he whispered all but inaudibly.

"Shall I try to help you?"

"Ah, if you could!"

"Perhaps I can. Let me think for a moment."

I paused to collect myself and steady my voice which was beginning to tremble.

When heartwhole I could have faced an army without flinching; *now* I began to stammer like a raw schoolgirl.

"Do you remember where you were, Carlo," I began in a somewhat low voice, "the evening preceding your fall over the cliffs?"

He looked inquiringly at me—then, all at once, the red blood flushed up to the very roots of his hair.

"At what o'clock?" he asked in a voice scarcely audible.

"A little while before mounting guard."

"Yes, I was sitting with Renzo upon the bench under the terrace."

"And I was upon the terrace—just over your head."

"Then you——"

"Heard all. Yes, Carlo, I have known your secret from that hour."

"And you are not angry—not offended? My presumption—You—you do not despise me? turn me out of your house?"

"Carlo!"

My eyes swam with tears—my voice was choked.

"Ah, Signora Marchesa, and such a marriage would not—you would really consent?"

"To all you wish. Carlo, Carlo, you should never have doubted it."

He seized my hand and covered it with kisses. My head was just sinking upon his shoulder when a slight noise from the balcony startled me. The next moment Ida was kneeling at my feet.

"Oh, thanks—thanks, Marchesa! May heaven bless you for your goodness! I always told Carlo that you would never hinder our happiness!"

None ever knew the fatal mistake I, in my blindness, had committed. Ida's words broke my short and happy dream for ever. But they also suddenly armed me with my old familiar panoply of worldly self-possession. My heart was breaking, but they knew it not. Their own bliss blinded them to my misery. Or were they, perhaps, too generous to notice my romantic folly?

I cannot say. I could almost add, I do not care.

Of my secret agony I will tell you nothing. I bore it all; and though a very hell of love, jealousy, mortified pride, wounded vanity—every bitter feeling, in fact, was seething in my heart, my smile never once wavered, my voice never once faltered.

Early training stood me in good stead.

Nor of one single day or hour did I abridge my stay at Vallegrande. Only in the solitude of my own room or in my long, lonely rambles did I find momentary solace for my misery.

Without affectation I busied myself with such arrangements as were necessary to procure Carlo's discharge from service, and constitute a dowry for Ida which might enable them both to live in comfort. The former took both time and trouble—the latter was much more speedily accomplished.

One bright July morning all the inhabitants of Vallegrande were assembled upon the beach to witness our departure.

Ida and Marietta were already in the boat. I was giving a last farewell to the people among whom I had passed five long months of my useless life.

Carlo was at Genoa, summoned thither by the Intendant of Finance to receive his discharge.

I had arranged all, so as to leave during his absence, for I did not wish to risk a farewell.

It was, perhaps, acting rather cruelly to Ida, carrying her off thus; but they were to meet so soon again to part no more, that my

conscience was quickly silenced. I am afraid I was secretly glad. I am but human after all, and when I reflected that—— But, no—I had better be silent.

"Doctor," said I to the little man as he sat opposite me in his accustomed chair, looking precisely (waistcoat and all) as I had left him months before; "doctor, I want you to send me away from Turin once more—and this time right out of Italy."

"Where would your ladyship like to go?"

"Anywhere, provided I can find lots of people to admire and envy my twenty-five new toilettes."

"What do you think of Aix-les-Bains?"

"The very thing!"

"And Ida?"

"I leave her to be married from a friend's house. It's all settled. Her intended is to arrive some day next week.

"And when do you think of starting?"

"To-day is Tuesday—well, on Saturday at the latest."

"And you remain away——?"

"Ah, doctor, that is more than I can tell. Till I'm cured, I suppose."

The little man laughed silyly.

I went. But not all the waters of Aix-les-Bains have been able to heal the wound inflicted on my foolish old heart in those few brief weeks of an Idler's Idyll.

A. BERESFORD.



QUIS SEPARABIT?

DOth darkness bar
Planet from planet? (Blindness me from thee?)
Across the void light flashes wild and free,
Star unto star!

What swift replies
Can rain give sunshafts when their glances meet!
Such rainbow glories as outflash, my sweet,
When eyes meet eyes!

Can seas that sweep
Earth-shores have blessing of the depths of the sky?
Rain falleth, as descends thy sympathy,
Deep unto deep!

What power to calm
Has night the ever restless sea and land!
Such soothing as when, dear, I hold thy hand
Palm within palm!

Can ocean slip
From earth's embracing arms that round her wind?
Can love escape when kisses link and bind
Lip unto lip?

What other choice
Have choristers 'mid leafy boughs in spring
Than like us twain at Nature's call to sing
Voice to loved voice?

Sure end hath strife
On battlefield when rays of peace downfall:
Creeds, race, laws blend when true love merges all
Life in sweet life!

No force shall part
The comrade winds when o'er the world they ride
Unfettered; nor shall any power divide
Heart from free heart!

Though ocean roll
From strand to strand the faithful swallow wings
Across, as fly love's swift imaginings
From soul to soul!

ELIZABETH GIBSON.

A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

I.

HE had read the notice to cyclists a little way back, but Grierson was no novice to shrink a slope like this, and the hill promised a pleasant change after the dead level of the last few miles. With his feet up, and the handles gripped firmly in his strong brown hands, he flew down the sunny road, leaving a cloud of white dust in his wake. The swift motion was exhilarating, and he congratulated himself on having for this one afternoon abandoned that patient waiting for an improbable bite.

The descent became steeper towards the bottom of the hill and the impetus greater, but all would have been well had it not been for an incident which the most cautious of riders could not foresee. A dog suddenly broke through a gap in the hedge and ran straight in front of the wheels. Grierson had but a moment to swerve aside, and then, skilled rider as he was, he failed to recover his balance, and went crash into the hedge over the top of his machine.

It was a minute or so before he regained consciousness, and even then he hardly grasped the full extent of his injuries. He felt sick and giddy from the shock, and was conscious of a sharp pain in his right arm; but his greatest concern was for the fate of his beloved bicycle.

One glance was sufficient to prove that in its present condition it could not even be wheeled home, and he ruefully calculated that it must be five miles at least to Bishopsleigh. The only thing to be done was to wait for some passing vehicle, and with his throbbing head and aching arm he was not sorry to sit on the grassy bank for a while.

He glanced up the road he had so lately traversed, but he could not conscientiously blame himself for recklessness. He had "scorched" down worse hills than this with impunity. It was to the dog that the accident was due.

As his brown eyes rested on the white and dusty road, another bicycle appeared in view. Grierson's face clouded and he uttered an impatient exclamation as he rose painfully to his feet. He had somewhat old-fashioned opinions on the subject of women, and the sight of a girl on wheels was displeasing to him. Anxious to avoid the humiliation of accepting help from a woman he made a show of busying himself with his wrecked machine. It was then that he discovered that his right arm was useless, and the effort he had made

to move it renewed the feeling of faintness which had diminished during his rest.

The girl slowed down as she approached the scene of the accident, but as Grierson took no manner of notice, she passed him without any remark. She had, however, caught a fleeting glimpse of his blood-stained face as she swept by, and the signs of pain were unmistakable. Wheeling round sharply she jumped off her bicycle and retraced the few yards which separated them.

"I am afraid it is not only the machine that is hurt?" she said inquiringly, her quick eyes taking in the well-knit figure, the pale, proud face at a glance. "If I can be of any use—this spot is five miles from everywhere, I believe—I'll be only too glad to do anything."

"Thanks," he said stiffly, raising his battered hat a little awkwardly with his uninjured left hand. "You are very good, but I shall have to wait for a vehicle of some kind to convey this wreck to Bishopsleigh."

"In the meantime I hope you'll let me attend to your own injuries," she returned with gentle solicitude. "This arm now, see how queerly it hangs. I shall be surprised if it isn't broken."

She was passing her ungloved fingers lightly and tenderly over the aching limb, and before he well understood what she was doing, she had it placed square from the elbow across his waist.

"Just keep it in that position for a moment, now," she said persuasively, stripping a branch or two from a hazel-tree in the hedge. "You don't happen to have a newspaper about you, I suppose? It would come in so very handy just now."

Fortunately Grierson was able to comply with her request, and with a few skilful touches she constructed an admirable cradle in which to rest his hand and the fractured forearm.

"There," she cried cheerfully, securing it with her necktie, which she had ruthlessly cut in two, "isn't that more comfortable? Now I'll trouble you for your handkerchief, please; and when the poor arm is in a sling, you won't know yourself, you'll be so easy."

Her piquant face all aglow with tender sympathy, and in spite of his strong disapproval of the modern young woman, he could not but be grateful to the skill which had given him such speedy relief.

"Thank you," he murmured, gratitude struggling with the coldness he had assumed to conceal his mortification at his humiliating position. "I am glad you make no amateur attempt to set the bone."

"Ah, no! that is out of my province," she returned demurely, standing on tiptoe to fasten the sling at his neck. "The very first lesson the lecturer impresses upon the students at an ambulance course is not to poach upon the doctor's preserves. And he repeats the warning when he dismisses you with his blessing after the course is finished. The rest of my ambulance knowledge is somewhat hazy now, but that one fact remains clear and fresh as ever."

The girl was doing her best in her own bright way to cheer her patient, but she found it uphill work, and his coldness and reserve were quite disconcerting.

"I don't think there is anything else that I can do," she observed, regarding the stained and dusty figure critically. "It is fortunate you wore a hat with a brim, or your head would have been even more knocked about than it is."

"I must cut a ridiculous figure altogether," he said sorely, removing his damaged hat and turning it about disgustedly. "Talk of the muzzling order—I devoutly wish it were law to keep every dog in the country chained to its kennel."

"It was a dog, was it, that caused the spill?" she asked with interest. "And on this slope, too! It is a blessing the smash wasn't worse."

"It was bad enough," he returned with a rueful laugh. "It is precious little fishing I shall get with my right arm in splints."

"It *is* hard," she agreed sympathetically. "And it will interfere with your boating, too. But perhaps you are fond of reading and will be able to kill time in that way."

"Yes," he assented; "mercifully there are always books, and they never bore us, as so many people do. As you say, it might be worse."

"I am afraid it is useless offering you my machine," she said, her blue eyes looking up frankly and kindly into his. "But can't I send you a cab from Bishopsleigh? You might wait here for hours on the chance of anything passing, and the sooner your arm is seen to, the better."

"If it would not be troubling you too much," he responded. "My name is Grierson—they will know me at the inn."

"Then I will see that they send at once," she said, preparing to mount.

"You must think me very churlish," he interposed, stepping forward impulsively. "But, indeed, I am not as ungrateful as I must appear. Won't you let me know whom I have to thank for so much skill and kindness?"

"Oh, that is all right," she answered lightly. "I'm only too delighted if I have been of any small service. O'Brien, my name is. Paddy—Patricia O'Brien. Good-bye, I hope the arm will go on well. I won't forget to send the cab."

With a smile and a nod she was off, and he stood watching the trim, grey-clad figure as it sped down the road until it was lost in a cloud of dust.

"A girl of the period," he murmured, as he seated himself on the bank once more. "And Irish at that. What a total absence of that engaging shyness of the last generation! And what a name—Paddy O'Brien. A red-hot Nationalist, I have no doubt, and one of 'The Lague.' But she was kind—most kind—and her voice was delicious."

The time of waiting seemed endless to Grierson with his aching head and painful arm; but at length he caught the sound of wheels, and was thankful to pack himself inside the roomy open cab with the fragments of his ill-fated machine. He found his landlady quite prepared to receive him; and the doctor, too, was in waiting with splints and bandages laid out ready in the low-ceiled, wainscoted room which overlooked the winding river.

"Well now, that is very nice," remarked the dapper little man, regarding the temporary supports with professional interest. "A clever young lady that, and with all her wits about her. Yes, yes—just as she said—a simple fracture of the radius. You may consider yourself very fortunate, my dear Mr. Grierson, that you have not worse injuries to account for. These stray dogs are the greatest source of danger the cyclist has to contend with. The best of riders is at their mercy, and may come off worse than one who hasn't the courage to turn aside. Now, we will have this coat off and get to work."

During the bad quarter-of-an-hour which followed, the doctor was loud in his praises of the skill and practical good sense shown by Miss O'Brien.

"Why, twenty years ago," he cried, "not a woman in a thousand would have known what to do in such an emergency. She would have gone off into a little faint on her own account to complicate matters still further. But in these enlightened days we have changed all that."

"Yes," assented his patient ungraciously; "but at the expense of much that made women most womanly."

"Women are as sweet and sympathetic at bottom as they were twenty years ago," averred Dr. Harvey, as he turned and folded the roller bandage with a careless skill. "They may not faint at a mouse or scream at a spider, but in all essential qualities they are what they always were and always will be—the true helpmeets God has bestowed upon us undeserving men."

"They have a champion in you, at any rate," was Grierson's remark as he lay back in his chair, pale and exhausted from the pain he had borne so unflinchingly.

The doctor would have been better pleased if he had gone into raptures over Miss O'Brien's beauty—her kindness—her undoubted skill. This expressed and unexpressed disapproval of Grierson's made the little man quite indignant. It would have been so delightfully natural if this painful incident had led to a little romance. But one glance at his patient's impassive face was sufficient to quench any faint hopes the doctor may have entertained, and it was with a sigh over the unsentimental spirit of the age that he made his way out into the sunny village street.

Grierson was a prisoner for nearly a week. In his fall he had pitched somewhat heavily on his head, and, though his straw hat had

been some slight protection, he felt the effects of the blow in a severe nervous headache which lasted for days. The glare of the sun only aggravated the pain, and all day long he lay on a couch in his darkened room, alone and uncheered except by the occasional visits of his busy landlady and the garrulous little doctor.

Thrown thus upon himself, it was only natural that his thoughts should turn a good deal upon his accident; but it surprised and annoyed him to find that he could think of nothing else. The remembrance of his scantily-expressed gratitude was a misery to him, and it added to his regret that he could do nothing now to repair his churlishness since neither the doctor nor the landlady knew anything whatever of Miss O'Brien. It was improbable that he should ever come across her again, and yet her face with the long-lashed, grey-blue eyes, the low, rich voice with that faintest suggestion of the brogue, haunted him incessantly. He began to fear lest his brain should be affected, for it was altogether unlike him to be impressed by any girl, and this girl was irritatingly up-to-date and hailed from the land he cordially detested.

During the second week after his accident, Grierson took to sauntering along the river-bank to the wooded creek where he had been wont to fish. Here, in the shade of the oak-trees, he would lie with his book and dream the sunny hours away. So isolated was the spot, that he thought himself the sole discoverer of it, until on approaching the place one morning he heard the sound of a laughing voice. A moment later he caught sight of the kneeling figure of a girl as she tried to balance a biscuit on the reluctant nose of a big black-and-tan collie.

"If your thirst for knowledge, Bran, were only as eager as your desire for the biscuit," she was saying severely, "we should make a little progress, perhaps. Now then, for the last time, one, two, *three!*" But the biscuit had disappeared into the dog's mouth before the second number was uttered, and the girl's laugh rang out again, fresh and joyous.

Bran hung his head with a guilty air and raised a deprecating paw as she sank back into a sitting position on the short dry grass.

"Ah, dear! I am afraid you are hopelessly stupid," she said, "or abnormally greedy. The higher education of doggies is uphill work, and the incidental expense in the way of biscuits quite ruinous. I think I deserve one, Bran, to fortify the inner woman after my stupendous efforts, and here is a final one for you as a token of my forgiveness. Catch!"

Grierson thought it time to make his presence known, and he was surprised at the keenness of his pleasure at meeting the girl who, he fancied, had passed out of his life for ever. Miss O'Brien made a hurried snatch at the dog's collar as Grierson approached; but she relaxed her hold with a sigh of relief when she caught sight of his face.

"I was afraid you were a limb of the law," she explained, nodding at him in a frank and friendly way as he raised his hat. "Policemen have become a nightmare to me since the muzzling order was passed, and my guilty conscience conjured up awful visions of a fine and alarmingly indefinite 'costs.' I hope your arm is mending well?"

"Thanks very much; it is knitting capitally," he answered, looking down into the beautiful eyes he remembered so well. "I have *you* to thank for that, Miss O'Brien. I have been longing for an opportunity to express my gratitude, but no one knew where you lived, and I feared I should never see you again. I was horribly ungrateful that day—the memory of it has been a real trouble to me. I hope you will overlook it, and put it down to the shaking I had just received."

"Why, there is nothing to overlook," she said kindly. "One doesn't expect effusiveness from the unlucky possessor of a broken arm and innumerable bruises. If I remember rightly, you were not too steady on your feet when I arrived upon the scene, and I am sure you were inwardly wishing that I had ridden on and abandoned you to your fate."

Grierson reddened as he met the quizzical glance and then laughed a little awkwardly.

"May I sit down?" he asked. "One gets such a pretty peep of the river from her, and it is about as far as I care to go. You came by boat, I see."

"Yes," was the response, her eyes following his to the punt at anchor close by. "I know the upper reaches pretty well, but I haven't been down here before. It is perfectly lovely."

"You live near here?" he ventured, oddly anxious for her answer, but uncertain how she would take the question.

"Oh, not always," she returned with an emphatic shake of the head, "though I no longer live at home. I am staying at a farm up the river for my holidays. Rooms are cheap about here, and the country is refreshing after the dust and heat of Town."

Grierson's brow had clouded. He had heard of girls living independently away from their natural protectors, and he had always strongly disapproved of the practice; but in this case he saw the dangers and disadvantages of the life with a vividness that was almost painful. Paddy's quick eyes allowed few things to escape her, and with innate mischief, she was at some pains to shock this conventional Scotchman still further.

"I should never be content at home, you know," she said confidently, claiming his sympathy as a matter of course. "My step-father is a narrow-minded, bigoted Scotchman, and he takes life so terribly in earnest that he thinks the most harmless amusement a deadly sin."

Grierson looked somewhat conscious as her eyes were uplifted in apparent innocence to his; but he was too honest to conceal from her his nationality, even while he coveted her good opinion.

"Yes," he admitted, almost humbly. "I am afraid we Scots as a race are too apt to take our pleasures sadly."

Paddy felt a thrill of admiration for him as he spoke, and liked him better at that moment than she had thought possible.

"My step-father objects to taking his in any form whatever," she laughed. "One might easily forgive him that if it ended there, but when it comes to cutting off the pleasures of every member of his household—well, it doesn't conduce to peace or happiness, Mr. Grierson."

"It is tyranny," he said warmly, "and no one is required to submit to that. No one with any spirit *could* submit to it."

"I couldn't," she observed quietly, "and so I left my native land to seek my fortunes in London. It was a risky thing to do," she added reflectively, "when you come to think of it. If I had known what it meant I suppose I should never have had the courage. But fortunately I did not know, and somehow or other I have worried through, and now if I can glean any fun out of this puzzling world there is no one to raise any objection."

"I don't think I have gleaned much fun out of my existence so far," he said, his dark eyes resting on the pretty, mobile face intently. "I am a barrister, you know, and I am chiefly occupied with the seamy side of life. During the long years while I waited for the briefs which never came, my motto was, 'Grin and bear it.' It did not occur to me to look round for any flowers that might grow by the wayside."

"And has your philosophy been rewarded yet?" she asked, her tender voice full of sympathy.

"Thank you, yes; the briefs are dropping in with tolerable frequency now. I think I shall henceforth take a leaf out of your book, Miss O'Brien, and be on the look-out for any pleasures that may fall in my way."

"I would," she returned, rising and shaking off the crumbs of biscuit from her short serge skirt. "Let my step-father be a warning to you, and learn to enjoy life before it is too late."

"You are not going?" he said, rising slowly and reluctantly as she held out her hand. "It is quite early yet."

"It is nearly half-past twelve," responded Paddy with a glance at her watch. "And I dine at one. Good-bye."

"Oh, but you will let me see you again?" he cried eagerly, following her to the shelving bank where the boat lay at anchor. "You might take pity on my loneliness, Miss O'Brien. You cannot conceive what a terrible week I have had of it. These few minutes with you have been a joy—a—a boon to me."

"I suppose we can hardly avoid falling in with one another now and again," she said coldly, "as long as we are both staying down here. But if you are so dull at the inn, why don't you go back to town?"

"London is so delightful in August, isn't it?" he inquired bitterly. "But you need not be afraid. I shall not persecute you with my society. Allow me to help you into the boat."

Very stiffly and awkwardly he managed it with his uninjured left arm, and it was with difficulty that Paddy maintained a grave face as she seated herself and slipped the oars into the rowlocks.

He eyed her wistfully as she sat there, so fresh and dainty in her trim white blouse and sailor hat, and a rush of pity for his own loneliness and helplessness swept over him, carrying all his pride and resentment away. A deadly fear that he should once more lose sight of her assailed him, and he spoke hurriedly and humbly as she made ready to start.

"One moment, Miss O'Brien," he interposed, entreating her with eyes and voice. "I had no right to resent your words just now, but I don't think I quite deserved them. Just picture to yourself my lot for the last ten days, in a little country inn with absolutely nothing to do, and not a solitary creature to speak to. To meet with an educated person to have a few minutes' rational conversation after so many dreary hours of pain and weariness would transplant you into another world. Was it so great a crime to ask for another brief respite from the dreary monotony—since it cost you so little?"

"Ah! I didn't understand," she cried penitently. "It was horrid of me not to think of it. If to talk to me is any relief in the weariness of your life, why, do it as often as you like."

"Ah! that is so good of you," he murmured gratefully, the flush of victory colouring his dark cheek.

"You are not able to boat even?" she continued, with that pitiful impulse strong upon her. "If you would care for it, I will row you up to the weir to-morrow afternoon."

The girl regretted her offer almost as soon as it was made. Poor Paddy! She spent her life in acting on the impulse of the moment and regretting it when too late. She recalled the words which had offended her, and she flushed hotly as she realised that he might misunderstand her kindness—might construe it into an encouragement to flirt. Notwithstanding her light and easy manner, she was acutely sensitive, and it hurt her dignity cruelly that she should have laid herself open to such misconstruction.

With Paddy, her word was as good as her bond, and she meant to fulfil her promise at all costs; but she went prepared by the iciness of her demeanour to keep Grierson at arm's length. He was waiting for her where they had parted the day before, and her heart was set at rest in a few brief moments by the quiet friendliness of his manner, which hinted at nothing beyond gratitude and respect.

"This is a shameful reversal of the natural order of things," he observed, as the boat went smoothly and swiftly through the water, propelled by the long and easy strokes. "I don't half like causing you this extra exertion, Miss O'Brien."

"I don't feel it," she smiled, getting a better idea of the strong and rugged face at these close quarters than she had been able to do hitherto. "I am used to boating. We have a river at home."

"I should have imagined the powers that be would have disapproved of so worldly an amusement," he suggested, pulling Bran's ears as the dog lay curled up at his feet.

"Perhaps that is why I have always been so devoted to it," was the demure reply. "Forbidden fruits taste sweet, you know, Mr. Grierson. All my amusements were forbidden, and they were all of them passing sweet."

"Were they taken surreptitiously then?" he inquired, his dark eyes resting pitifully on the expressive face so near his own.

"Well, no; I am afraid I never troubled to conceal my delinquencies," she answered with dancing eyes. "But as I was always made to pay dearly for them, my conscience felt clear of reproach."

"I wonder how you ever stood the life," he said warmly; "for you could not possibly have had any affection for such a tyrant."

"Oh, it was not altogether one-sided, you know," she smiled mischievously. "I fancy he found me rather a thorn in the flesh. He was accustomed to such lamb-like submission from everyone else that my defiance simply maddened him. It was excellent discipline for his fiery temper," she added sweetly.

Grierson laughed outright. "I believe you enjoyed it," he said shrewdly.

"I believe I did," she confessed, a laugh lurking in the depths of her lovely eyes. "If it hadn't been for my poor, crushed little mother I should be there now, making his life a burden to him."

"Instead of materially lightening the burden of life for me," said the other gratefully. "You can hardly understand what a ghastly time I have put in since my accident, Miss O'Brien. Ladies have more resources than men, I think. I am a lonely being at the best of times, but it never came home to me before how utterly friendless was my lot."

"You have been depressed," she said gently, "and things have looked blacker in consequence. You will feel differently when you are back at your work again."

"And you?" he suggested wistfully, "You seem so bright—so self-sufficing. You never know what it is to feel lonely, I suppose?"

He was distressed at the effect of his words a moment afterwards, for the blue eyes filled with sudden tears, the sensitive lips quivered with strong feeling as she turned her head aside.

"Ah! forgive me," he pleaded. "It was cruelly thoughtless of me to ask such a question! I might have known that you must be lonely too."

"Yes," she admitted brokenly. "I *am* lonely; I have my sad moments now and then. But it is better to be lonely and sad than to make those you love unhappy."

"You could not do that," he cried incredulously as she winked away her tears.

"Ah! but I did," she returned with a sad little shake of the head. "My step-father is jealous of my mother's love for me, and her heart was torn in two between us. She dared not show me any affection for fear of him, and his harshness towards me embittered her existence. He is devoted to her, you know, in his own dour way, and they will be much happier now the bone of contention has removed herself from the scene."

She ended in her usual airy tone, and her bright courage roused his admiration as her loneliness appealed to his chivalry.

"Would it be impertinent to inquire what you are doing?" he questioned a little anxiously after a moment's silence. "You spoke yesterday as if you had had somewhat of a struggle to gain a footing in London. Is it firmly established yet?"

"Oh, I make a living now," she answered carelessly. "I confess that I failed to do so at first, and had to fall back upon the funds they had supplied me with at home. I illustrate the articles on dress, you know, for some of the purely feminine magazines. I have the *entrée* into several of the West End houses, and make sketches of certain gowns and hats and bonnets which are pointed out to me. It is not a very noble career, but it is the only one I am fit for, and it at least enables me to be independent. Ah! here we are at the weir. Should you care to land?"

II.

"DEAR MR. GRIERSON,—As I have been unexpectedly recalled to town, I am returning your books with many thanks. So sorry that I shall not be seeing you again to say good-bye. Don't be in too great a hurry to use the arm. In haste, yours sincerely,

"PATRICIA O'BRIEN."

Grierson read and re-read the few hurried lines with a feeling akin to despair. He had been so blissfully happy these last five days! His dreary past had been forgotten in the joyous present; the future was bright with a tremulous hope. And now—now all was over—he should never see Paddy again."

A month ago he would have laughed to scorn the idea that his life could be changed in one short week by a mere slip of a girl. Women he had regarded as a necessary evil to the existence of some men; but as a factor in his own life he had allowed them no place. His speedy surrender was the more surprising since Paddy possessed the very attributes against which he was most strongly prejudiced. It was very little that he knew of her, but that little was certainly antagonistic to what had hitherto been his ideal in women.

It was with an effort that he presently pulled himself together and

went out into the bright morning sunshine. Some instinct told him that the journey would be useless; but he fancied he should feel more satisfied when he had been to the farm to inquire if she had left any address. His one slender chance of finding her was then to follow her to town. But London was wide; and his heart failed him.

To the end of his life Grierson never forgot the keen anxiety, the bitter hopelessness of the next few weeks. The one faint clue he held he followed up with persistence, and each day found him "doing" the shops with a devotion as earnest as that of the most frivolous woman there. Now and again his heart would leap at the sight of some small and dainty figure in the crowd; but the hope was only momentary, and he found the disappointment increasingly painful.

On Sundays he had no work to distract his thoughts, no shops to visit, and it was on these days that his quest appeared most hopeless. He learnt to dread the long, lonely hours in his silent chambers, and to escape them, he would walk unweariedly up and down the Embankment until the daylight died. He found something soothing in the soft lap of the quiet river—Mother Nature's gentle sympathy stole upon him unawares.

It was at the grey stretch of the river that he was looking this softly, sunny afternoon. The clouds were taking a roseate tinge behind the dark towers of Westminster; the bridges stood out black and clear against the brightening sky.

The rays of the setting sun were in his eyes as he sauntered slowly westwards, and it was not until he was close upon her that he recognised the girl who was approaching him. All the blood in his body rushed to his face as he met her friendly glance; then, ebbing away, left him pale, and trembling like a girl.

"Is it really you at last?" he faltered in a deeply moved tone, clasping her hand close and tight as if he could never let it go.

"It is really I," she laughed a little nervously, embarrassed by the strong feeling he displayed. "I hope you are quite recovered from your accident by this time? I see you have left off the sling."

"Oh yes, thank you; I hardly feel my arm now," he returned absently, his eyes clinging to her face in a yearning gaze. "And you—how have *you* been getting on all these long, long weeks?"

"Have they been so long?" she inquired dryly. "I have been so busy lately that the days have flown."

"They have seemed endless to me," he observed quite simply. "And each one has left me more hopeless than the last."

Paddy did not pursue the subject. Something in the direct glance of his honest brown eyes may have made further questioning unnecessary.

"When I left Bishopsleigh so hurriedly," she hastened to say, "it was to take up a rather different class of work. I was offered the

chance of doing the illustrations for a new selection of fairy tales, and the opening seemed such a good one that I was afraid to lose a moment."

"You must like it better than the eternal bonnets?" he suggested, falling naturally into her step as he walked along at her side.

"Oh, it is perfectly delightful!" she cried, eagerly. "I don't believe, you know, that I have ever really and properly grown up. Children's games and children's stories are still a joy to me, and I just revel in these fairy tales. The ideas come so fast that the days are not long enough to crowd them in, and I should work at night only I get too sleepy."

"It is a mercy that you do," he said, his eyes resting tenderly on the pretty, animated face. "Night-work is simply suicidal, Miss O'Brien."

"Oh, I have tried it!" she admitted. "I did my best. After investing in a packet of the greenest of green teas, I brewed it as strong as I knew how, and as the evening advanced I imbibed more and more freely. But it was all in vain," she added sadly, with a dolorous shake of the dainty head. "I fell asleep over my sketch-book, and very cold and miserable did I feel when in the morning the housemaid came in and roused me."

"Night-work doesn't pay," averred Grierson. "I have tried it in my time, and it had no lasting effect on my iron constitution; but I have known men whom it has injured for life. It is an indisputable fact, I suppose, that you cannot break the laws of nature without suffering for it."

"I have had my lesson," she smiled, as she stopped and held out her hand. "I must go home now, Mr. Grierson, or I shall be late for tea. Your chambers are this side of Charing Cross, I expect?"

"Yes; but you will allow me to walk back with you?" he said, urgently. "Don't refuse me, Miss O'Brien! If you only knew how I have tramped over London to find you——" He ended abruptly, afraid that he had gone too far. "If you will let me see you home, I should consider it a great privilege," he ended quietly.

"If it is not taking you too far out of your way, come by all means," she returned, embarrassed, but hardly displeased.

"It cannot be too far for me," was the ready response. "And see what a glorious sky we shall have before us all the way!"

Silence fell upon them as they watched the last lingering rays of the setting sun. The quiet river reflected the gorgeous hues of the western heavens, which deepened in colour with every moment, until the glowing orb sank out of sight and the clouds slowly and softly paled.

"Isn't it wonderful?" sighed the girl, turning her rapt face towards her companion. "Can you wonder at our forefathers worshipping the sun?"

"One would almost think he had a worshipper in you to see your devotion," he said quizzically.

"Oh, there is still a good deal of the Pagan in me!" she laughed. "I am a true Celt."

"I suppose you are," was the thoughtful rejoinder. "And yet—I have always been so prejudiced against the Irish as a nation."

"It is not surprising," she returned, a little sadly. "Such cruel deeds have been done in the name of patriotism that it is no wonder that all sympathy should be alienated from us. I turn off here, Mr. Grierson. If you are at all tired——"

"Do you *want* to get rid of me?" he asked, with a quick and earnest glance into the wistful eyes upraised to his. "You always seem to me a kind of beneficent fairy, you know. I should not so much fear your vanishing for ever if I might just see the house you inhabit."

"Its dreariness will be quite sufficient to reassure you on that point," she said, with an amused laugh; "and I don't feel at all as if I dwelt in fairy-land. My imagination is not equal to such a flight as that."

"Is it so very bad?" he questioned, pitifully.

"Oh, the others seem to like it well enough!" she answered, sweeping back under her hat the straying, wind-blown curls. "They are all high-school mistresses, you see, and they have the same work, the same interests. Mrs. Norton is kind according to her lights, I suppose, but we only see her at meals. It is preferable, of course, to solitary rooms; but it isn't exactly home-like, Mr. Grierson. We are close to the Abbey fortunately, and that makes up for a great deal."

She had paused before a dreary house in a long terrace in which every other house was of precisely the same dull, but eminently respectable pattern.

"It seems horribly inhospitable not to ask you in," she said, flushed and apologetic. "We have each a bed-sitting-room, but there is absolutely no place where we can invite a friend. The drawing-room floor is let, and Mrs. Norton reserves the dining-room for her own use."

"Pray don't distress yourself on that account," he said quickly, holding out his hand in farewell. "If I might come to the Abbey some afternoon on the chance of seeing you?"

"I always go to the afternoon service on Sundays," was her smiling rejoinder. "Good-bye!"

That hour in the grey old Abbey lives in Grierson's memory still. He purposely came a little late, but his quick eyes soon descried the slim graceful figure of which he was in search, and he was fortunate in securing a seat just behind that occupied by Paddy.

He was impressed by the quiet reverence of the girl's attitude, the unconscious earnestness of the lovely face, and the meaning of the stately service came home to him as it had never done before. The influence of it was still upon him when he joined her in the aisle, and

it was in silence that they passed through the low doorway and out into the keener air.

"Don't you love the stillness of it all in there?" she said, glancing up a little curiously into his softened face. "And have you noticed how, on the noisiest day, you leave the roar behind you directly you enter the Abbey? That dim silence is so restful after the hurry and bustle of this workaday world."

"You are young to feel like that," he observed half-wistfully.

"But then, you see, I am Irish," she laughed softly. "Irish gaiety has always a touch of sadness, I think; and there is generally laughter behind our tears. That is why we are such an irritating, incomprehensible people to the unimaginative, level-headed Sassenach."

"You are not thinking of going in just yet, are you?" he questioned blankly as she turned to cross the road. "I thought—I hoped you would go for a little walk after service?"

"Oh certainly, if you would like it," she assented carelessly. "Where shall we go? To the inevitable Embankment?"

Now, during the past week Grierson had been carefully thinking out the position, which the friendlessness of both of them rendered difficult, and he had marked out a certain course for himself. He had never hoped for such an easy opening as this, and his trained mind was quick to profit by it.

"There is not a wide choice, is there?" he smiled, his spirits rising at a bound. "I suppose you have beautiful walks galore round your home in Ireland?"

"Galway is just a *little* different from this," she returned, her eyes sweeping the horizon with a touch of disdain in their glance. "But in London one hardly looks for the beauties of nature."

"Galway?" he echoed thoughtfully. "I spent a week in Galway once for the salmon-fishing. I wonder if I ever met your father, Miss O'Brien?"

"Fishing?" she queried, raising the level brows incredulously. "Oh no, Mr. Grierson. He considers it a culpable waste of time."

"Still, it is just possible that I may have come across him," he persevered. "How does he call himself, this terrible step-father of yours?"

Paddy's senses were acute, and there may have been a latent earnestness in his tones which roused her suspicions.

"Why do you want to know?" she asked, looking up at him with frankly inquiring eyes.

"I want to write to him," he answered, colouring a little under his tan, but meeting her glance steadfastly. "I have never been introduced to you, Miss O'Brien. You know nothing whatever about me, and I should feel more satisfied if your people made inquiries which would prove to you that I am a fit person for you to associate with."

"But I don't want any proof," she retorted with a little amused

laugh. "I am quite satisfied on that point already. Really, Mr. Grierson, life isn't long enough for one's parents to write round inquiries as to the character of every chance acquaintance one makes."

"But that is just it," he said very earnestly. "I don't want to remain a mere chance acquaintance. To me you are the one being of importance in the world. I love you—I have loved you from the first. Oh, I am well aware that you do not care for me. I know it is very doubtful if you ever will. All I ask is that you will let me see you now and then, that you will let me write to your people so that you may know exactly what manner of man I am."

Her cheeks had paled as he proceeded with his avowal, but at the last few words a rush of colour flushed them anew.

"No, no," she cried in quick distress. "You must not write—I cannot let you indeed. Why, they would imagine that I was in love with you!"

She stopped in dismay at the effect of her impetuous words; but he crushed down his pain with iron will, and answered her with a smile.

"They could hardly think anything so unlikely as that," he said gently, without a trace of bitterness. "But it must be just as you please, of course, Miss O'Brien."

"Oh," she said impulsively, "don't think I am not sorry, Mr. Grierson. And I like you so much, you know, you ring so true. But I am sure you must be making a mistake in fancying you care for me like this. You know so little of me. I am not a bit the kind of girl to suit you. I should shock you twenty times a day."

They had come to a standstill, and now, with their faces turned to the quiet river, stood absently watching its silent course.

"Whatever mistakes I have made in the past," he said with earnestness, "I am making none now. You *must* believe that, Miss O'Brien."

He waited for a moment, but as she made no response he went on:

"You say you like me. Well, that is something—that is a great deal. As you know me better, as you see the depth and faithfulness of my devotion, you may learn to care just a little bit for me. At any rate let me have that hope to live for. Do not avoid me because I have told you of my love. I will not worry you about it. I will not speak of it again until I have your permission. Perhaps when the spring comes you will listen to me once more."

It must have cost Grierson much to keep his promise, during the months that followed; but keep it he did with rigid fidelity. Not a word or sign escaped him to remind her of that talk by the river, and his manner was so quietly friendly that she was quite at her ease with him.

Their intimacy grew apace. Grierson was often the mysterious

possessor of concert tickets or tickets for some *matinée*; there was not a gallery in all London they had not visited more than once, and the Abbey service with a walk after it had become a weekly institution.

Paddy was very happy in these days. She often gave a passing thought to the old lonely time before her friendship with Grierson, and it was always with a thrill of gratitude that she realised what a difference it had made in her life. And her thoughts would sometimes revert to certain extravagant words of his spoken that day on the Embankment. Did *he* ever think of them? she wondered. Was he ever tempted to break his promise?

She was rudely awakened out of her happy dreaming; without one note of warning her maidenly pride was humiliated, cast in the dust. The slight was open, so undisguised, that surprise and indignation dulled at first the full effect of the blow. But as the days passed on and it was still in vain that she awaited any explanation of his broken engagement, she realised all Grierson was to her. Insensibly he had crept into her thoughts, entered into all her plans, filled her vague dreams of the future. He had stolen her heart unawares, and now she was left stranded by his desertion, her whole life wrecked.

The shame of it crushed the girl. She had put such blind faith in his love, his constancy. How he must have wearied of her—how low she must have sunk in his eyes when he could leave her like this without a word! Under the weight of such a humiliation she could never raise her head again.

The leaden-footed weeks dragged slowly by, robbing Paddy of all her youth and gaiety. The light step, the laughing voice no longer brightened the dreary boarding-house, and Mrs. Norton began to glance a little uneasily at the hollowed cheeks, the tragic eyes.

Nearly a month had passed since Grierson had failed to keep that last appointment, and any lingering hope that Paddy may have entertained had faded long ago. Oppressed with a sense of bitter shame, she remained indoors as long as daylight lasted, and it was only when the afternoon had waned that she ventured to leave the house. Even then, the dread of meeting him was strong within her, and she kept to the more ill-lighted streets to avoid recognition.

She was more than usually tired and depressed this evening as she mounted the steep staircase and entered her firelit room. She put away her hat and coat mechanically, and felt along the mantelpiece for the box of matches. As the gas flared up she noticed for the first time that there was a letter lying on the table, and she sat down on the rug to read it while she warmed her hands and feet.

The writing was quite unfamiliar to her, and it was with no especial interest that she broke the seal. The printed name of a London hospital caught her eye as she unfolded the letter, and in another moment she was sobbing over it as though her heart would break.

"He might have died," she whispered brokenly; "and I have

been thinking so cruelly of him all the time. I might have known he must be ill."

She straightened out the letter and read it through once more, tears and smiles struggling for the mastery.

"DEAR MADAM," it ran. "At Mr. Grierson's desire I am writing to explain how it was that he was unable to meet you on New Year's Day. On his way he was knocked down by a passing cab, and was brought to the hospital quite unconscious. It is only to-day that he has recovered sufficiently to speak, and he hastens to explain what must have appeared like unpardonable rudeness. He begs me to send his kind regards, and to say that he is progressing very favourably.

"I am, dear madam, faithfully yours,

"MILLCENT CARRUTHERS.

"P.S. I am adding these details on my own responsibility. Mr. Grierson nearly lost his life in rescuing a little crossing-sweeper. His head was badly injured by a kick from the horse, and he was brought here in a critical condition. The fever has run high, and the delirium has been incessant. One name alone has been on his lips through all his wanderings. If I am right in supposing that you are 'Paddy,' a visit from you would do him more good than all the doctors and nurses in London. I am aware that this postscript is unprofessional, and you may possibly think it impertinent; but I am studying the welfare of my patient, and must risk that. Mr. Grierson is in a private ward and could see you at any time after ten in the morning. Ask first for Nurse Carruthers."

There was no sleep for Paddy that night; her thoughts ran riot. She trembled as she remembered Grierson's danger, his suffering, his delirium. Her heart beat high with pride at his bravery, and her eyes grew misty, her lips quivered, when she recalled who it was that had been with him through all his feverish imaginings. Remorse for her cruel doubts of him tortured her, yet her heart was singing with joy at the knowledge that he loved her still.

The hospital clock was striking ten the next morning as she asked the porter for Nurse Carruthers, and a minute or two later she was following the white-capped nurse up the wide stone staircase, and down the long corridor which led to the private wards. With a final warning that she must not excite the patient, the nurse knocked at the door, and then discreetly retired.

Grierson had been prepared for Paddy's visit, and his eyes were fixed in eager longing upon the door. It was with trembling fingers that the girl turned the handle, and a faltering step that she entered the small, bare room.

His closely-shaved head, his pallor, his face so thin and changed, were all a shock to her, and the yearning love in his great brown eyes

went to her heart. She tried to speak as she took the frail white hand in hers, but no words would come, and she stood looking down upon him silently, with tear-dimmed eyes and quivering lips.

"This is so good of you," he said, his voice weak and faint; "to come so soon. Won't you sit down? Here, please, where I can see you. It is so good to see you again."

His eyes were full of the joy he would not utter, but his first thought was one of concern for her distress.

"You are not crying?" he asked, tenderly. "You mustn't do that. I am wonderfully better now, you know. I suppose I look a ghastly wreck; but I shall soon pull round now that I have turned the corner."

"How you must have suffered!" she said, tremulously. "It—it is a sad reward for your unselfish bravery."

"Oh, that was nothing!" was his hasty response. "Just the instinct of the moment. And the poor little chap has been here every day to inquire after me?"

"I should hope so!" she began warmly. "It is the least he could do when you nearly lost your life for his sake."

Grierson turned his head slightly on the pillow in order to see her better.

"And what," he questioned, a little anxiously, "have you been thinking of me all this time?"

"I?" she said, flushing uneasily as she met his glance. "It doesn't matter now, does it? It is all explained."

"But what *did* you think?" he repeated insistently. "Tell me!"

"Oh, I was horrid!" she answered humbly, looking down at him with softly penitent eyes. "I was angry—indignant. I never guessed—how *could* I guess?—that anything so dreadful could have happened."

"And you cared?" he said, his voice low and eager, his eyes dwelling intently upon her.

"Cared?" she echoed nervously, avoiding his searching glance. "Yes—oh, yes!—I cared. It—it hurt me horribly."

She was sitting very near the bed, the light from the uncurtained window full upon her. Some subtle change in the downcast face filled Grierson with a sudden, tremulous hope.

"Paddy!" he whispered, brokenly. "Look at me, Paddy! I—I won't break my promise, dear; but——"

"Oh," she cried impetuously, leaning towards him in a rush of love and pity and tenderness, "if you still care—if you still wish——"

"You know I do," he breathed, gathering her outstretched hands into his own frail clasp. "With every beat of my heart, my dearest."

"Then—then I care too," she said, laying her cheek softly against his where it rested on the pillow.

B. A. BARNETT.

A GOLDEN GRIEF.

"What though the social circle be denied,
 Even sadness brightens at her own fireside,
 Loves, with fixed eye, to watch the fluttering blaze,
 While musing memory dwells on former days,
 Or Hope, blest spirit! smiles, and, still forgiven,
 Forgets the passport, while she points to Heaven."

Henry Kirke White.

WHAT is a golden grief? Is it not a grief that can look backward, through its tears, on a past illumined by kindness, and forward, if also through tears beyond the brightening west, to a renewal of that past in a more perfect future? What else can gild the dark cloud of sorrow but some such reflections from the sun of Hope, and from the lesser light that rules the night of memory?

"And when this heart hath ceased to beat—oh! think,
 And let it mitigate thy woe's excess."

Thus does the dying Gertrude of Campbell's poem console her lover:

"That thou hast been to me all tenderness,
 And friend to more than human friendship just.
 Oh! by that retrospect of happiness,
 And by the hopes of an immortal trust,
 God shall assuage thy pangs—when I am laid in dust!"

Somewhat thus, too, does a forgotten versifier * of the seventeenth century attempt to comfort her husband. Writing under the spell, it would seem, of approaching death, she entreats of him that when she shall have been taken from the world and its "necessary pain" (a beautiful touch of resignation), there shall "no blacks be worn" for her:

"Not in a ring, my dear, by thee!
 But this bright diamond, let it be
 Worn in remembrance of me,
 And when it sparkles in your eye,
 Think 'tis my shadow passeth by,
 For why? more bright you shall me see
 Than that or any gem can be."

A thought as sparkling as the diamond, and that must often have flashed comfort on him with its rays. Leigh Hunt, giving a passage from the anonymous minstrel's poem, quaintly remarks that if any one wishes to know "what sort of a thing the shadow of an angel is," he cannot learn it better than from these lines.

* Dyce's "British Poetesses."

With something of the anxious persistence of the sick, the dying wife harps on her reluctance that there should be any mourning whatever on her account :

"As if there were some dismal deed
Acted to be when I am gone."

Gone, as she shall be, to the "bright palace" of Heaven's King.

And in her revolt against the emblems of mourning, many would sympathize with the gentle lady of a bygone century. Dickens was a strong protester against the outward symbols of grief, as was also Tennyson. The once popular Irish poet, Thomas Parnell, draws a vigorous contrast between the gloomy trappings of death, and the bliss of the enfranchised soul.

If death be but the path to God :

"A port of calms, a state of ease
From the rough rage of swelling seas,"

how ill it befits us to welcome it with such mournful emblems as he enumerates, the sable weeds and gloomy cypress, the mourning poles and funeral streamers :

"Long palls, drawn hearses, cover'd steeds,
And plumes of black that, as they tread,
Nod o'er the escutcheons of the dead?"

For death was attended with even darker ceremonies in the poet's days (he died in 1717) than in our own :

"Nor can the parted body know,
Nor wants the soul these forms of woe,"

reasons Parnell. And rising on the eager wings of faith high above this atmosphere of mortal misery, the dreary "earth-side" of death, as Mrs. Browning called it, he exults in the glorious prospects opening on his spirit-vision.

"A just man summoned by God—for what purpose can he go but to meet the Divine love and goodness? I never think about deploring such ; and as you and I send for our children, meaning them only love and kindness, how much more *Pater noster*?" So Thackeray wrote to his friend, Mr. Reed, on the death of Mr. Reed's brother.

An instance of this spirit carried to its logical conclusion is given by Rudolph Lehmann in his "Reminiscences." Condoling with his painter friend, Friedrich Overbeck, on the death of his wife, he was assured by the bereaved husband that the occasion was not one for lamenting, but rather for rejoicing. "All through life," he said, "we pray : Lord may thy kingdom come ! and when it comes we lament and cry, instead of thanking Him. When we lost our only son at the age of nineteen we thanked God on our knees for having preserved him from the temptations of this wicked world."

It is in the fine extravagant vein of the old poets that Ben Jonson, in his *Elegy on the Lady Anne Pawlet*, administers comfort to the stricken parents under the semblance of reproof. After painting a glowing picture of her joys, he bids them :

"Go now, her happy parents, and be sad,
If you not understand what child you had,
If you dare grudge at Heaven, and repent
T' have paid again a blessing was but sent,
And trusted so, as it deposited lay,
At pleasure to be called for every day.
If you can envy your own daughter's bliss,
And wish her state less happy than it is."

Shakespeare, too, who knows so well how to lacerate the heart with his descriptions of grief, knows also how to administer sharp and wholesome rebuke to the over morbid exhibitions of it :

"Comfort, dear mother ! God is much displeas'd
That you take with unthankfulness His doing.
In common worldly things 'tis called ungrateful
With dull unwillingness to repay a debt
Which with a bounteous hand was kindly lent ;
Much more to be thus opposite with Heaven
For it requires the royal debt it lent you."*

So does the Earl of Dorset admonish the distracted widow of King Edward IV., Queen Elizabeth.

Milton, it will be remembered, imparts to a mother's loss, the grace of a free-will gift to God :

"Think what a present thou to God has sent,
And rendered Him with patience what He lent !"

Again, to return to Shakespeare in the Play of "*Romeo and Juliet*," Friar Lawrence soundly rates the passionately bewailing parents of the supposed dead Juliet. If all they wished was her promotion now that she was promoted, even to heaven itself, their love, if it were true love, would rejoice, or at the least they would keep their grief within the bounds of hope and resignation :

"For though fond nature bids us all lament,
Yet nature's tears are reason's merriment."

A strange word that "merriment" in such a connection. It recalls a passage in the "*Arabian Nights*," where Abdalla of the land, being shown by his friend, Abdalla of the sea, the wonders of his submarine existence, comes on a party of merry-makers feasting and singing. And Abdalla of the land asks if a wedding is being celebrated among them. "And he of the sea answered, 'There is no wedding being celebrated among them ; but a person among them is dead.' Abdalla of the land therefore said to him, 'Do ye, when a person dieth among

* *Shakespeare*—"King Richard III.," Act II., Scene 2.

you, rejoice for him, and sing and eat?' His companion answered, 'Yes. And ye, O people of the land,' he added, 'what do ye?'"

And on hearing of the very different fashion in which a death was celebrated on land, the merman's indignation at what he considered this breach of trust and gratitude toward the Giver and Disposer of life was so great that he broke off all companionship with his namesake from that moment.

Wordsworth, in one of his "sonnets to liberty," tells of an ancient and beautiful rite in use amongst the Biscayans, who, on the death of a child, attire the little body in white vestments:

"And, in like sign of cloudless triumph bright,
They bind the unoffending creature's brows
With happy garlands of the pure white rose.
This done, a festal company unite
In choral song; and, while the uplifted cross
Of Jesus goes before, the child is borne
Uncover'd to his grave."

But every consideration of comfort will break down at times beneath the storms of human grief. The comforter's own eyes (and even when the comforter was Christ Himself) are blinded with tears in view of the desolated earthly home. Parnell, who dwelt so rapturously on the thought of release from this prison of the flesh, was said to have hastened on his own death (he died at the age of thirty-seven) by grief for the death of his wife, and the intemperance in which he sought to drown that grief.

The old French troubadour-poet, Boniface Calvo, knew how to present this double aspect of bereavement, all chill and gloomy on the one side, all lit with rainbow brightness on the other:

"Oh! if this grief destroy my rest
'Tis not from doubt that she is blest;
I know that those enchanting eyes
Shine brighter now in Paradise."*

Or our own old English poet, Francis Quarles:

"Sweet soul, forgive the treason of my pen,
Which makes thy state the subject of a tear,
And with false whining kills thee once again!
Forgive our folly, or disdain to hear:
Thou art an angel, we alas! but men;
Our words are nonsense in thy purer ear:
We crawl below, while thou still'st crown'd above,
Filled with the peace of Heav'n's Triune Jehove;
Yet in our childish tears accept our childish love!"

and yet may it even be that the bright eyes of our friends in bliss are dimmed with a touch of our own grief when we sorrow for them as those without hope, overshadowing, perhaps, with the unyielding cloud

* Translated by Louisa Stuart Costello.

of our gloom, the lives of those who are still left to bless us. In a poem of William Barnes, the Dorsetshire poet, a mother tells how, in a dream, as she sought her little lad in heaven, there went by her a troop of fair children :

"Each in lily-white,
With a lamp alight . . .
Then, a little sad,
Came my child in turn,
But the lamp he had,
Oh ! it did not burn ;
He, to clear my doubt,
Said, half turn'd about,
'Your tears put it out :
Mother, never mourn !'"

A fancy recalling the German folks' tale of the bereaved mother whose child appeared to her in a dream, his little garment wet with the tears she never ceased to shed for him, and entreated of her to desist from the mourning that alone hindered his happiness.

Norris touches on the same idea in his poem "The Grant," wherein he describes the vision vouchsafed him in sleep of her whose loss he mourned.

"And why this grief and passion for the blest ?" she asks :

"My state is bliss, but I should live
Yet much more happy would you cease to grieve.
Dry up your tears, dear friend, and be
Happy in my felicity.
By this your wisdom you'll approve,
Nay—what you'd most of all commend—your love !"

So, too, on Petrarch's trance of grief when as to his distorted fancy, all nature seemed to mourn with him for Laura, the very birds "piped mournfully," the dark leaves trembled to the breeze, and the stream murmured in its flow, while he, in love with his grief, turned everything to food for it—suddenly she for whom he vexed his soul appeared to his wondering gaze :

"Why ever thus," said she, "thy days consume ?
Dying, I live,—and when I closed my eyes
They open'd to the light of Paradise."

Pascal bids mourners never say of their beloved dead that they have "lost," but rather "restored" them. "My son is dead ; I have surrendered him. My wife is dead ; I have given her up." We read in Dean Stanley's life that during his first interview with Mrs. Arnold after Dr. Arnold's death, "he had told her of the way in which, among his own family, his uncle, Augustus Hare, had always been spoken of as if yet alive. She had eagerly caught at the idea, which he now found was practised among them." Sir Walter Scott was of

Dean Stanley's mind in this respect. Writing in his diary after his wife's death, "we speak freely of her whom we have lost," he says, "and mix her name with our ordinary conversation. This is the rule of nature." And going on to reprobate the habit of blotting the names of the departed from the familiar discourse of those who love them, "The Highlanders," he adds, "speak of their dead children as freely as of their living members—how poor Colin or Robert could have acted in such or such a situation."

And why should the dearest names be banished from our talk, the names that soften all our thoughts and link them to heaven? Even as our names who are left behind are still, we trust, in use amongst those whose lips we can hear no more pronouncing them, except in dreams.

Longfellow muses by the fireside of his child passed from earth, following in fancy her growth into a fair maiden in her heavenly Father's mansion:

"Day after day we think what she is doing
In those bright realms of air;
Year after year her tender steps pursuing,
Behold her grown more fair.

"Thus do we walk with her, and keep unbroken
The bond which nature gives,
Thinking that our remembrance, though unspoken,
May reach her where she lives."

And as one thought of past tenderness has a stronger grief-assuaging spell than all the words of comfort in the world, so does a memory of unkindness poison what might else have proved the healing fountain of our tears. Yet even for this bitterest pang of bereavement, the genial Irish Poet, William Carleton, has found a suggestion of comfort. It occurs in his racy ballad, "Betsy and I are out":

"And if ever we meet in Heaven, I shouldn't think it queer
If we loved each other the better for having quarrell'd here."

To the remorseful dweller on bygone feuds and failures in affection, no less than for the heart that is innocent of reproach, a love which has passed through the ordeal of death, comes out radiant with a new revealing light:

"Love an eternal temper took,
Dipped, glowing, in Death's icy brook,"

says Coventry Patmore in "The victories of love." And the same harsh measure that baptises love in immortality also washes away from it those stains and blemishes which deface its image here.

That is a golden grief, however dark though some of its memories may be, that can dwell in delighted reverie on the eternity to come wherein the pent-up treasures of love and devotion may be poured at

the beloved one's feet ; that can say to the swiftly passing seasons in their course :

"O days and hours, your work is this,
To hold me from my proper place,
A little while from his embrace,
Nor fuller gain of after bliss :

"That out of distance might ensue
Desire of nearness doubly sweet ;
And unto meeting when we meet,
Delight a hundredfold accrue,"—

as Tennyson fed his hope, till he could say at last that his sorrow for the days of happy communion gone by was merged in this prospect of bliss to be.

And thus, gradually, one learns to look to heaven as the true home, into which one's treasures are being gathered. "The future world seems so like a real home," wrote Princess Alice, on the death of her uncle, King Leopold of the Belgians, "for there are so many dear ones to meet again."

"'Tis sweet, as year by year we lose
Friends out of sight, in faith to muse
How grows in Paradise our store,"

writes Keble. And even the thought that the last departed has gone to swell the bliss of those already assembled on the far-off shore, is a drop of sweetness in the bitter cup. "He's gone to his mother, and if I'm sorry, she's glad!" cries a bereaved father in one of George Macdonald's stories.

The very perfection of comfort is contained in Landor's poem to Mary Lamb on the death of her brother Charles. It would indeed be a golden grief that could appropriate all its items of consolation. Praise of the departed, that most soothing strain to the survivor's ear ; the suggestion of his sympathy with the sorrow left behind him ; and the prospect of reunion with him under the lost conditions of human blessedness in a region where human griefs can never enter :

"Comfort thee, O thou mourner, yet awhile !
Again shall Elia's smile
Refresh thy heart, where heart can ache no more.
What is it we deplore ?

"He leaves behind him, freed from griefs and years,
Far worthier things than tears.
The love of friends without a single foe ;
Unequalled lot below !

"His gentle soul, his genius, these are thine ;
For these dost thou repine ?
He may have left the lowly walks of men ;
Left them he has ; what then ?

"Are not his footsteps followed by the eyes
Of all the good and wise?
Though the warm day is over, yet they seek
Upon the lofty peak

"Of his pure mind the roseate light that glows
O'er death's perennial snows.
Behold him! from the region of the blest
He speaks : he bids thee rest."

But even if some of these, even if all of these sources of comfort
should fail, is there not still left the mercy of God to rest upon :

"Heaven overarches you and me,
And all earth's gardens and her graves.
Look up with me, until we see
The day break and the shadows flee.
What though to-night wrecks you and me
If so to-morrow saves?"*

* Christina Rossetti.

P. W. ROOSE.



WAYFARERS.

BLEAK lies the road along the mountain height,
 Melting in lengthening distance dim and grey,
 The heavenly vision flashes on our sight
 Only to fade away,
 And faltering we delay;
 Fair is the valley—very green and fair—
 Our tired feet are fain to linger there!

Across the plains the winds are blowing chill,
 Yet fiercely at the noontide burnt the sun,
 Point after point we strive to gain, and still
 Another lies unwon,
 Breathless and faint we run;
 Until the hopes that cheered us almost seem
 The fleeting fancies of a fevered dream.

Nay, though we stumble, though our hearts may ache,
 The city that we seek has but one road,
 He who has suffered all things for our sake—
 Himself the Son of God—
 This very pathway trod,
 And as He passed, He left as His decree
 For all who love Him, "Follow after Me."

Then we will follow. What though over-borne
 Each with his burden, soil'd with dust and heat,
 Above the misty hills shines clear the dawn
 That leads us to His feet.
 Then shall their rest be sweet
 Who well have kept through loss and toil and strife
 The straight and narrow way whose gate is life.

CHRISTIAN BURKE.



AN UNEQUAL BATTLE.

BY CHRISTIAN BURKE.

"The common, unrhymed poetry
Of simple life and country ways."
J. G. Whittier.

BETWEEN the comparatively important market-towns of Sedgley and Norton is the little wayside station of Heronhurst.

Travellers for this bourne are recommended to alight as rapidly as possible, for the fussy local train is always late, and, consequently, always in a hurry. It has no time to waste in the service of foolish people so "left to themselves" as to desire to stop short at this out-of-the-way corner of the world, when civilisation itself is only another seven miles off.

A few years ago there was no station at all for Heronhurst, and although local enterprise has prevailed upon the iron monster to stop some three times a day at this little siding, there are still a good three miles—country miles, mind you, not those of a London cab-driver—before one reaches the village. A short cut takes the pedestrian across the meadows, and if it does not greatly lessen the distance, it is infinitely pleasanter than the dusty high road, along which the farmers' carts, the doctor's trap, and the ubiquitous tourist with his cycle pass and pursue each other in a cloud of August dust.

The path runs through fields of corn and barley, and over the common, where the gorse is a blaze of golden blossom, and the rabbits play hide-and-seek among the furze and bracken.

Skirting the common is a belt of dark pine trees, and as you go down the zigzag path to the left, a miniature river comes twinkling merrily through the grasses and flows by your side to the very village itself, where it slips under the moss-grown bridge and hurries on, widening as it goes, to turn Josiah Cranley's mill-wheel another mile away.

An excellent little guide this river, landing you in the heart of Heronhurst, with the great square tower of the old Norman church keeping steadfast watch at one end of it, and the heavy iron gates of the Grange visible at the other. Between these two outposts stretches an eccentrically wavering line of cottages and quaint, old-fashioned timbered houses, broken here and there by a strip of walled garden, above the brickwork of which an aspiring hollyhock or two gives a hint to the passer-by of the hidden glories within.

Commerce is but sparsely represented among us. The inhabitants, wisely remembering that "two of a trade never agree," purchase their local peace by an innocent system of monopoly. There is only one

butcher's shop, but the burly, blue-sleeved occupant will faithfully supply you with fresh meat once a week, and fish, an it please you, on Tuesdays, but never by any chance on Fridays. The only other trading establishment is "the Shop" *par excellence*, which looks like a grocer's, but also is the post-office and the baker's (for feckless folk who don't bake their own bread) and the linen-draper's into the bargain.

A primitive little hamlet this, too insignificant to be marked on an ordinary map, with a bare three or four hundred inhabitants, if you include all the babies and count in the farthest outlying farms. And yet, all the same, there are those very three or four hundred life-histories being spun out within the shelter of its homely walls.

There would be plenty of material for a story if we walked in at the open door of the Vicarage, or over the threshold of the hard-worked, ill-paid country doctor. Even rosy-cheeked Mr. Mills (though it may be granted that a butcher is not a picturesque figure) or the grim face of Elijah Solwater, blacksmith, and deacon at Ebenezer Chapel, might furnish us with something that would be well worth the telling.

But it is a page in the history of the old shop that the present writer is bent on recording; and if you are not in a hurry, we can just step across and admire the latest fashions, and drink a cup of Miss Tryphena's fragrant tea for old acquaintance' sake, in the dim, rose-scented octagonal parlour.

From time immemorial the Arleys have kept "the Shop" at Heron-hurst, and given an air of grave stability to the tiny community. Vicars and curates come and go, doctors depart for wider spheres of labour, schoolmasters and mistresses change to suit the Education Department; even the boys and girls turn out to see the world; but as long as the old business is handed down from father to son, the good people of the village are able to keep their equilibrium amidst the rush and stir of the world and the growth of modern improvements, typified by a real line of railway three miles off.

Not even this latter innovation has tempted them to do their marketing at Sedgley or Norton. "Arleys" had always kept "the best of everything;" and Miss Tryphena invariably knew what they wanted, even when they didn't know themselves, besides being patient and considerate when times were bad and the new baby turned out to be twins.

Once, and only once, had they faltered in their allegiance. The white-haired rector still tells the story, for it is an old one now. There is generally a suspicious moisture in his keen blue eyes before he gets to the end of it, and his hearers are scarcely in a mood to find fault with him, for there is something pathetic, after all, in the little comedy. Years slip by almost unnoticed in peaceful Heron-hurst. The squire is a trifle stouter than he was then, and the rector's spare, elastic figure is more bent, while Miss Arley's hair is white. That, however, was the work of a few months, and Stephen Millington was responsible. But you don't know who Stephen Millington is, so we'd better begin at the beginning.

Nearly twenty years ago, the Arleys' business was in the heyday of prosperity. Miss Tryphena was a woman of fifty then, and she had carried on the establishment ever since her father and mother's death with a skill and energy which had made a very comfortable thing of it. Miss Tryphoza, the younger sister, had been, if not her right, at least her left hand in all the years that they two had lived and worked together.

It was characteristic of the sisters that although the elder was always "Miss Arley," or at least "Miss Tryphena," the younger submitted with a good grace to be "Miss Phoza;" for even the villagers considered life hardly long enough for the use of both the names with which some eccentrically-minded godfathers and godmothers had endowed them. The younger Miss Arley was the gentler and, in some respects, the weaker nature of the two, but, after all, matters worked out very well as it was. Nobody wants two right hands, while it would be exceedingly awkward to be without a left one, and Miss Tryphena's life would have seemed empty and forlorn indeed without the sister for whom she had toiled and thought and fended ever since she was in her teens.

Those who knew them in their early prime say that Miss Arley was considered the village beauty, and there is a hint of more than one suitor sent about his business, because she would not desert Miss Phoza or the Shop.

Indeed, what would have become of either if she had? For the best-regulated establishment will not go of itself, and Miss Phoza's idea of business was to sell everything at cost price. As it was, she carried it into practice to some extent, and might be heard meekly defending herself against her sister's remonstrances by the plea that it was only "poor Mrs. Codger," and she had but three-halfpence, and not a bit of tea in the house; or 'tis but a taste of strawberry jam for little Ellie Martin, and she hardly knows what it is like with that feckless mother of hers that cannot make a decent bit of bread, let alone a pot of preserve against the winter: arguments at once conclusive, if illogical, and whereby Miss Tryphena was usually vanquished; for, as she said, "business" is apt to make one a trifle hard, and after all it is largely a matter of advantages—one might have been born a Mrs. Codger oneself! And if the balance at the bank was a smaller one than it might have been, the happy smile and the generous support of the sunburnt, lint-locked children perhaps made up for it.

It was in the early spring of an unusually fruitful year, when farmers were prosperous and farmers' wives well supplied with cash, that the Arleys suddenly found themselves confronted by a rival.

Exactly opposite to them there had stood for many a long day a large barrack-like-looking red house. It had been built years before by an enterprising builder, and so badly to boot that no tenant could be found to inhabit it. Lawyer Merrick, for whom it had been originally designed, would have none of it, and so it remained empty, a blot on the landscape and an eyesore to Miss Tryphena, for it blocked out her view of the pine-clad hills. At last, in an evil

day, it entered into the grasping soul of Stephen Millington, general dealer and provision merchant of Norton, to rent it, turn it into a shop, and open there a branch of his own business at Heronhurst.

Miss Tryphena was away at the time, in itself an unusual event, but Richard Arley, their nephew, had died suddenly, leaving a little daughter totally unprovided for, and the sisters had hastened to the rescue. The child, of course, came home with Miss Arley, a shy little person of seven years old, whose short life had been spent in the back street of a great town, and to whom the country presented problems of space and freedom alarming and delightful in almost equal proportions.

This meant another mouth to feed, and there had been debts to clear up, for Richard was one of those hapless people who never get on; and now, to crown all, the head of the house woke up the first morning of her return to find herself confronted with a smart plate-glass window crowded with articles of every description, and bold red placards soliciting a trial by offering the novel wares at "enormous reductions," and boasting of doing business on a system of "small profits and quick returns."

The blow—for it was a blow—fell all the harder, in that although there had been rumours of such a step, she had no idea that it had actually taken place. During her two months' absence, Miss Phoza's rare letters had not alluded to it. Ill-news flies apace, the latter thought; there was time enough when her sister returned to tell it. Moreover, in her simplicity, she did not regard the new-comer as in any sense likely to be a formidable rival. That the fickle-minded villagers would desert the place where they and their fathers and grandfathers had spent their earnings was a thing quite beyond her powers of imagination. She was a little anxious, but that was because she felt instinctively that the moving spirit of the home would resent the glaring vulgarity of the intruder, but she was not afraid, and made no counter-move of opposition.

— Thus it came to pass that the enemy had nearly two months' start in which to beguile the simple souls around him by specious advertisements and arguments, and to let every one know that through his large connection he was able to place goods of marvellous value at the disposal of his patrons, and which, such was the excess of his benevolence, he generously offered to them at a mere half their value.

Miss Tryphena's dark eyes took in the whole situation at a glance, and her heart sank within her at the thought of the adverse balance caused by Richard's incompetence, and the extra expense of the child to feed and provide for, but she gave no outward sign of it. Indeed, her spirit soon rose to the conflict; she was a brave woman and clever, and at first she almost enjoyed the excitement of the contest, in which she fully meant to be the winner, and to drive the adversary ignominiously from the field.

Thus the battle began, but from the first it was an unequal one.

Stephen Millington, on his side, was not without a spice of genuine malice in what he had done. The Arleys had been large wholesale customers of his, until some trick of the trade had offended the principles of these two honourable women and they had promptly removed their custom elsewhere. He was rich enough to be able to lose a little at first to make more in the end, and to gratify at the same time his personal spite. He would teach that proud woman over the way that honesty was not the best policy before he had done, and in the meantime he loudly inveighed against the selfishness of monopolies, and vaunted the advantages of a little "healthy competition." Alas and alas for the consumers of Heronhurst! The farmers' wives, and the artisans, and the labouring folk, even Mrs. Codger, heard his fair words and believed him.

Trouble followed trouble. One of the Arleys' assistants, tempted by higher wages and promises of advancement, went over to the enemy, and the one that remained, a good plodding girl, though she did her best, could not replace the bright, smiling deserter who had helped to bring custom.

"Never mind, Leah; we are better off without her," Miss Tryphena said with a sad smile; "it is live and learn, for I would not have kept her for a day had I known she could treat us thus."

Even Miss Phozza was roused by this occurrence, and talked darkly of snakes in the grass, but it was chiefly on account of the slight to her sister, for she still persisted there was no cause for alarm, being one of those exasperatingly hopeful people who will not see what they do not want to see, although it is as plain as the proverbial pikestaff.

Summer slipped away, and the splendour of autumn was over, and the dark days came when Miss Tryphena found herself practically deserted in her quaint, old-fashioned shop. Across the road the gas flared late and gaudily, and the silver and the pennies that used to ring so cheerfully on the broad oaken counter trickled merrily into Mr. Millington's yawning tills instead. In the octagonal parlour at the back, with the firelight flickering on the panelled walls and diamond-paned windows, Miss Phozza sat knitting the white fleecy Shetland shawls for which she was famous, but which nobody came to buy since Mr. Millington had received a consignment of woven articles which he sold for a mere nothing and three-farthings, and which supplied a long-felt want.

Still the busy needles clicked from habit and the gentle face wore its tranquil smile. No one, to look at her, could have guessed that for Miss Phozza too there sat a grim phantom by the hearth—that day by day the misty cloud was deepening and the pale blue eyes peering ever more and more painfully through it. She never spoke to any one of the growing blindness that filled her own heart with terror; were there not anxieties enough? By-and-by, when the man over the way was gone—as go he would—she would perhaps find courage to tell her sister of the shadow that was coming, and ease her

mind by sharing with her the pitiful fear of a time when she who could do so little would be able to do nothing for those she loved any more. Thus each sister kept her own counsel and bore her own burden. Little Ray Arley, in her black frock, sat and watched them both with wistful eyes, and felt the trouble which she was too young to understand, so that she had scarcely energy enough for a decorous game with the great tawny-haired cat, who sometimes condescended to play in consideration of her youth and presumable frivolity. And in and out among them all tramped patient, blundering Leah, stumbling over her tasks and giving a great deal of love and devotion for a very small wage, which burnt her clumsy fingers, knowing how ill it could be spared.

In these days Miss Tryphena sat in her high uncomfortable desk, making believe to be busy at her books, while the brave heart of her was almost broken.

It was not only that the grey wolf of poverty was prowling about the doors, and waiting to spring across the threshold—it was that intolerable sense of injustice, of undeserved injury that made it all so hard to bear. Just as a soldier loves his profession, and the squire his broad acres, so she had loved her heritage, the representative of years of honest toil and skill both on her part and on those who had gone before. Now the time was not very far distant when the old name would be effaced, when she would be driven to save herself from utter shipwreck by putting up the shutters and leaving for ever the old house in which she was born.

There would still be a little—a very little—for the sisters to live on, and when the worst came to the worst they would go away with the child and hide themselves among strangers. But it was gall and bitterness to leave the intruder triumphant in the field, and she would not yield until the very last. So she scraped and pinched and thought out plan after plan to recover her foothold, growing worn and thin, and with the long white streaks making themselves visible in her soft abundant hair. That her sister and Ray might not suffer, she began to stint herself, first in the simple luxuries they allowed themselves, and then in sheer necessities. There was no one to prevent her, for Leah was in the shop at meal-times, and the cloud creeping over Miss Phoza's eyes made her strangely easy to deceive.

Misfortunes seldom come singly, and that year the squire and his family, who were a host in themselves, stayed on in London. The rector was invalidated abroad, and the curate-in-charge lived in lodgings, and only dealt in tobacco and stamps, which were hardly an extensive source of revenue. Dr. Leonard was newly come then, and still unmarried, and Mrs. Lawyer Merrick was a fine lady for whom Heronhurst was not good enough, and had all her stores direct from the county town. There was little help to be looked for, therefore, from the gentry, and no one with whom to exchange a word of advice as there might have been. For in a tiny community like this

the person who lives next door is *really* your neighbour, though you may live in a grange and he in an all-sorts shop.

The months dragged heavily on, and when the second Christmas came Mr. Millington outdid himself with the splendour of his goods, and gave toys to all the children whose mothers traded with him for bread and sugar, and soap and candles, and the like, to say nothing of the handsome crockery-ware actually given away with every pound of tea.

The heads of the good people of Heronhurst were turned for a season. First they came from curiosity, then because that innate love of bargaining (cloaked in a mantle they called economy) was aroused in them. Even when they discovered, as they did ere long, that the vaunted wares were nothing like so good as those "to Arleys," very shame kept them from going back. The improvident ones had old scores against them which made them loth to face Miss Tryphena's keen glance, while the careful ones excused themselves on the ground that Millington sold his goods dirt cheap.

On Christmas Eve the Arleys' shutters were, as usual, kept down till past nine o'clock, but the cracked bell which used to tinkle so incessantly was rarely stirred, and the owner had ample leisure for thinking as she sat with her ledger open before her, while Leah creaked to and fro, making believe to be tremendously busy. She had known for some time that she was playing a losing game, and now she felt she must give up the struggle; to hold on any longer would be to imperil their little all. Had she been alone, she felt that she would rather have spent every farthing she possessed before she gave the signal for retreat. Looking at the busy, showy window over the way, watched by an admiring crowd of customers which had once been hers, it required all her Christian fortitude to endure it, and not to make a too-pointed mental application of Nathan's parable to the loud-voiced individual who was cajoling his simple clients, having come over himself from Norton to put a little more life into things.

As the chimes rang out from the old clock-tower she closed the book, and bidding the sleepy shop-lad put up the shutters, sent him off home with a Christmas-box in the shape of a packet of groceries for his mother—all that she had to give—and went into the parlour, where Leah was laying the supper.

She felt strangely weak and weary, but she could not eat. Now that she had determined to throw down her arms the exhaustion of defeat came upon her with overwhelming force. For once she admitted that she was tired. "And no wonder," said Miss Phoza, "for Christmas was always a busy week"—unconscious that the sound of the bell that she had heard at intervals was due to a pious fraud on the part of Jack, the errand-boy, to prevent anyone guessing to how low an estate they had fallen. Miss Tryphena smiled, a hopeless smile which brought the tears into Leah's eyes, and then she went away to her own room, where Ray was already wrapped in the soft warm sleep of childhood.

She stood for a time at the frost-bedecked window, cold as it was, gazing out into the clear starlit night. The glaring lamps opposite were extinguished now, and only the vivid winter moonlight shone down the long street and lay upon the snow-covered meadows. Where would they all be another Christmas? she wondered bitterly; and then far away, softened by the distance, the voices of the carol-singers fell gently on her ear. "Peace on earth," they sang; and as she listened a solemn peace stole into the suffering woman's heart. After all, the threads of the tangled web were still in God's good keeping. If she must yield, it would be without dishonour. She owed no man anything, and the old name would be unsullied. There must be some great purpose in the pain, though her eyes were too dim to see it; and when at last she laid her weary head on her pillow, that deep peace had so possessed her soul that there was no room left for bitterness, even against Stephen Millington. "He does not know what it means to us," she said to herself; and with that thought in mind it seemed possible to endure the injury, and to follow, however feebly, in the footsteps of the Lord and Master of us all.

Yet if you stretch your violin-string a hair's-breadth beyond its proper limit the next thing that happens is that it snaps. If you strain the chords of a human heart one point beyond their natural tension they break, and the machinery is silent for ever, or at least gets seriously out of gear.

This was just what happened to Miss Tryphena. To give up was just the unbearable point, and when the bells were ringing merrily across the snow, giving both a welcome to Christmas and to the rector, who had returned quite unexpectedly from abroad, the villagers in their Sunday best were startled from their stolid calm when the prayers of the congregation were asked for "Tryphena Arley, now lying at the point of death."

The stress of the last few months, the long hours of exposure to the cold, when she had sat on unconscious of time in the freezing atmosphere of her room, had acted on a frame already exhausted by privation, bringing on a dangerous heart-attack, against which all Dr. Leonard's skill seemed unavailing.

The news spread like wild-fire through the little hamlet, and Jack had much ado to answer the inquiries of the shamefaced, wondering and repentant folk who thronged the doorway. Leah had shut herself up in the sick room, where she muttered fierce denunciations against those who took the very bread out of other people's mouths when their own barns were full to overflowing. Piecing together the shreds of information he extracted from the angry Leah and the tearful Miss Phoza, the doctor was able to form a pretty shrewd estimate of the real facts of the case, and in his first irritation at the seeming helplessness of the younger Miss Arley, he stumbled upon another startling discovery.

"Why don't you nurse your sister yourself?" remarked the

impatient young man abruptly a few days later. "She keeps asking for you, and though that Leah of yours is a good creature, she is but a girl at the best. I can't imagine why you stay fretting here when you're so much wanted upstairs!"

Then Miss Phoza turned upon him, not resentfully, but with a touch of gentle dignity which surprised him.

"I don't wonder you think it strange, doctor," she said quietly; "but the fact is, I don't see so well as I did, and my sister does not know it. I am afraid I might blunder and she might notice, and it would grieve her so."

He glanced up sharply, and noted with his practised eyes that although she was looking straight at him it was with the blank gaze of one almost blind. It was his voice that really guided her. Poor Miss Phoza! The darkness was very deep now, and the last few days of sorrow and weeping had but hastened the end.

"Good heavens! what are women made of?" the doctor burst out that evening, as he sat smoking a pipe in the rector's library. "There is one sister half starving herself that the other might feel no lack, and that other hiding her own calamity lest it might grieve the one who had 'so much more to bear!' They have each of them been enduring a secret martyrdom for the other, and through it all that detestable Millington has been growing fat and well-favoured on his ill-gotten gains. And the end of it is that the health of the one is practically ruined and the other is prematurely blind."

"The course of events is strangely governed," murmured the rector to himself.

"I haven't common patience with the course of events when it means Stephen Millington!" retorted the younger man angrily. "I beg your pardon, rector, but I should like to smother him!"

"And so we will, if he is in any way smotherable," replied the other with unexpected alacrity. "But what I was thinking of was this—these strange touchstones of character. You and I and half the village besides saw nothing a year ago in the Arleys but two women going down the shady side of the hill in comfortable, commonplace prosperity; now we know them for what they really are—souls who have passed through the Refiner's fire, and come out pure gold."

"Never, never will I laugh at Miss Phoza again as long as I live," exclaimed the repentant doctor a few weeks later—"not even when she sings in church!"

He had just come from the quiet room where Miss Tryphena was struggling back to life, while her sister sat by her side hour after hour, and under the pretence of being old and idle, still left the actual nursing in Leah's hands so that the invalid in her weak state might not notice her groping movements and guess the fatal truth. And the rector, who knew the agony of hearing the extraordinary variations in time and tune which it was Miss Tryphoza's good pleasure to introduce into the service, appreciated to the full the magnitude of this resolution.

"But remember you promised to smother Millington and all his company," continued his companion. "I don't see how any permanent good is to be done while that beastly glass snare of his robs them of their trade. But how are we going to get rid of him—that is the question?"

"Buy him out," returned the rector promptly. "I don't want any cheapjack like that perverting my lads and lassies. I've written to the squire, and he is willing to lend a hundred or two to clear the air. Moreover, I've my own private reasons for thinking he won't want to drive a very hard bargain."

"I'll bet you a bottle of quinine he won't budge while there's a halfpenny left in Heronhurst!" retorted the doctor incredulously.

But he did.

Strange to say, as the rector had predicted, the burly tradesman proved not unwilling to come to terms. Whether it was that he found he was spending more than his revenge seemed likely to be worth, or that already the tide of popularity was turning, and customer after customer was creeping meekly back to the old shop, which at least gave them good value for their money; or whether there was still something of the milk of human kindness flowing drowsily, but still flowing, under the selfish crust of money-getting, who can say? Possibly there was a mixture of all three.

Anyhow, when spring came, and Miss Arley was just able to crawl about the house leaning on little Ray's shoulder, her opposite neighbour determined to retire from business. He put up some flaming blue and scarlet bills and sold off his stock at an alarming sacrifice. He even came across and offered to the two sisters to purchase whatever they fancied at the price of a song, an offer they declined courteously but firmly, the very thought of his shoddy wares, which had cost them so much, being abhorrent to them. At the end of a fortnight he departed, to turn his undivided attention to his business at Norton, leaving Heronhurst many pounds the poorer for the wonderful bargains which for the most part made the buyers sadder but wiser women, but rich in the peace and unanimity which once more settled down on the little community.

The squire bought the offending shop, and turned it into a club-room for the men, to the joy of the wives and the disgust of the proprietor of the *Green Man*. And as she grew stronger, Miss Tryphena took up the reins of government once more. People came back with many a wise shake of the head, and inconsistent, improvident Mrs. Codger did no more than voice the general opinion when she declared that "changes was all very well for once in a while, but at least you always got a shilling's worth for a shilling to Arleys!"

One thing, however, neither Miss Tryphena's love nor the skill and kindness of the doctor and the rector could avail to alter. They could not lighten the darkness in which Miss Tryphena sat. Perhaps to her gentle, tranquil nature the trial fell less heavily than it would

have done on a more active person. Ray was hands and feet and eyes to her, and the knowledge that they had weathered the storm left her, as she said, nothing to wish for.

Time treads lightly at Heronhurst. Miss Tryphena's step is a shade less active and her hair is as white as powdered snow under her lace cap, but her clear brown eyes have not lost their fire, nor her cheek its delicate peach-like bloom. She is still the mainstay of the home, with faithful Leah and her underlings to help her; and if her portrait has been in any sense truly drawn, no one will be surprised to hear that the bright-faced lad who keeps the books, and who came to them when his father's failure and death left him adrift on the world, is a son of Stephen Millington. The old stock will not quite die out, for soon there is to be a wedding between pretty, blushing Ray and Josiah Cranley the younger, who has "fancied" her ever since she was but a maid of seven. He will not take her quite away, for the young couple are to settle down under the old roof, and one day perchance there will be the sound of little pattering feet on the shallow stairs, and children's voices echoing softly through the oak-panelled rooms.

Well, we have paid an unconscionably long call, and if you have finished your tea, we had better be going. We shall carry away with us, perhaps, a not untender memory of the elder sister's still beautiful face, and of Miss Tryphoza sitting with folded hands in the glow of the summer sunset. The night has come upon her sooner than on the rest, but she keeps her sweet serenity, for Love walks with her through the shadows, and by-and-by it will be Morning.

COMME ALORS.

FROM SULLY PRUDHOMME.

WHEN I was little, and no words could frame
For all that in my heart I wished to say,
Sweet kisses showered on me, soft footsteps came
There where I lay.

For grief to lose a toy I could but cry,
And search my cradle round with mute alarms,
Or, if I wanted kisses, helplessly
Stretch out my arms.

And now that I with fluent tongue can speak,
And no one comes to kiss me any more,
I still stretch out my arms and blindly seek
Just as before.

C. E. METEKERKE.

A MEMORY OF MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

HOW well I remember that walk !

It was on a lovely summer morning, more than half a century ago, that three very young, and in their own conceit, not unimportant people, set out from Grazeley Lodge, once her beloved home, to visit the authoress of 'Our Village' in her poor cottage by the wayside : and by invitation, too—to think of it—as she herself so often said.

We had been summoned by one of her little three-cornered notes—scraps of paper torn off from "copy"—short, hurried, so characteristic of the writer—and were bidden to eat fresh strawberries and cream as a prelude to her recital of the first scenes from her new play, 'Inez de Castro,' shortly to be produced at Covent Garden, where she confidently hoped that it would meet with no less success than 'Rienzi' and the 'Foscari.'

That she should have chosen to waste her breath upon so juvenile an audience would have surprised those who were less well acquainted with the simple-minded woman ; but it was one of the secrets of the influence she exercised unconsciously on all around her, that she brought everybody up to her own level, never dreaming that the height might be too great to suit less lofty intellects, and ready to give away poetic thoughts, fancies, enthusiasms to the baby in the lane who offered her cowslips, as freely as to the most highflown of her associates. Her idealisation of man, woman and child was one of her strongest specialities : the shoemaker, the blacksmith, the old women bean-setting, the driver of the mill team, are heroes and heroines no less than her own personal friends, who, to judge from her letters, must all have been the very salt of the earth.

In the present instance, she had fallen on a most responsive audience, who, if they did not always understand, could honestly and unaffectedly admire.

Children are not always accredited with the intuition they possess, and are better judges of many things than is generally allowed ; at all events it never crossed her mind that she might be throwing away her pearls, and still less would she have divined that she was sewing the seed of a romantic prepossession that no cares and occupations of after-life could ever efface.

The road from Grazeley Lodge to Three Mile Cross led over a dusty common, which would be described by a prosaic pen as traversed by overgrown by-paths and haunted by flocks of geese flapping their wings as they waddled towards the wayfarer, uttering discordant screams ; but we are told in 'Our Village' that we should find our-

selves on "that peculiar charm of English scenery, a green common divided by the road: the right side fringed with hedge-rows and trees with cottages and farm-houses irregularly placed, and terminated by a double avenue of noble oaks; the left, prettier still, dappled by bright pools of water, and islands of cottages and cottage-gardens, sinking gradually down to cornfields and meadows, and dotted with old farmhouses with pointed roofs and clustered chimneys looking out from blooming orchards, and backed by wooded hills."

A wanderer, full of pleasant anticipations raised by these picturesque details, would be strangely disappointed on reaching the village street which has justly been cited as the most commonplace collection of habitations that could well be imagined: ugly, poor, and mean, disposed on either side of the high road to Reading—Miss Mitford's own residence no exception to the rule. What words but her own could attempt to so embellish it?

"We first come," she writes, "to the pretty dwelling of the shoemaker, and on the other side, the blacksmith's gloomy abode; next door, the village shop, multifarious as a bazaar, and divided from it by a narrow yard. Opposite the shoemaker's, a habitation—a cottage—no; a miniature house with many additions, little odds and ends of places, pantries, and what not; all angles and of a charming in-and-outness; a little bricked court before one half, and a little flower yard before the other; the walls, old and weather-stained, covered with hollyhocks, roses, honeysuckles, and a great apricot tree: the casements full of geraniums; the closets (our landlord has the assurance to call them rooms), full of contrivances and corner cupboards, and the little garden behind full of common flowers, tulips, pinks, larkspurs, pansies, stocks and carnations."

Well, indeed, would it be if all such poverty-stricken dwellers in such a domicile could equally persuade themselves that it was a little scrap of Paradise.

There, as we now know by her memoirs and her letters, came many distinguished guests, who, quite indifferent to the surroundings and the lack of hospitality which it was one of her sorrows to have to renounce, would stay for hours in conversation on politics, the drama, art. Her good sense, her wit, her animation, her constant courage and cheerfulness were well appreciated by such men and women as Talfourd, Kenyon, Henry Chorley, Charles Kingsley, Mary Howitt, Elizabeth Barrett, and those beyond number who, enchanted by her rustic stories, came to verify the scenes and people she so pleasantly idealised. Nothing, however, irritated her more than to be the object of vulgar curiosity, however veiled by real or affected enthusiasm—to be thought a lion perfectly exasperated her.

But to return. We walked straight into the flower garden, and made welcome by the kindest looks and most caressing of voices, and led into what, in sober prose, would be called an outhouse, primarily, perhaps, a barn, two sides disguised a little by rows of plants in pots,

a space being left in the middle for a wooden table and a few chairs of the most primitive description, her favourite dog, Dash, the most unlovely if the most intelligent of pets, leading the way with the polite demonstrations of approval, practised by the sagacious of his kind. In front of the summer-house, so very properly called, as it was wholly uninhabitable in winter, was a stage on which was arranged symmetrically, according to height and size, a pyramid of geraniums, the pride and glory of the grower's heart, but so often threatened by the uncertain humours of wind and weather, that it may be doubted if the show occasioned her as much delight as disappointment.

In a letter to Miss Jephson, to whom she wrote constantly and exhaustively (it is astounding how a writer so hard-worked for mere bread and butter could find time for volumes of correspondence), she gives an anecdote which was very widely spread in the neighbourhood, and is doubtless still remembered if any of her Berkshire friends are still alive.

"One Sunday," she writes—Sunday was her reception day—"we were sitting in the greenhouse and were contemplating the splendid pyramid of two hundred geraniums before the door, withering, poor dears, in the sun, and afraid of a thunderstorm, and we were all lamenting for the hundredth time that not even a canvas awning could be devised to shelter them, when Captain G——, who, amongst other excellences is a great mechanic and a capital working carpenter, said: 'Can't it be done in wood? Anything can be done in wood! We must rig up a roof to let up and down sailor fashion.'

"A few days after, returning from a round of visits, I found the Captain and his men erecting the machine, which is really the most serviceable and beautiful canopy ever devised. A child can let it down and pull it up. It completely covers the two hundred plants, and is highly ornamental. There he sat in his glory at the mast-head, adjusting the blocks and ropes, having devised the whole and having actually made the greater part with his own hands.

"*Now don't you love Captain G——?*"

The object of our visit may seem to have been forgotten in the midst of so much to say, and so much to admire, but it is not so. Miss Mitford, or "Missy" as we had the impertinence to call her, had drawn our chairs as close as possible to her own, and taking a crumpled manuscript from her capacious pocket, began with a short sketch of the play that we might the better understand the scenes she was about to read. Like most *aspirants* her ambition had always been to write for the stage. Macready had made a success of 'Julian.' 'Charles the First' was to follow, and it is not surprising that she fully counted on her dramatic talent for her future fame; she thought little of her simple rustic stories, far from dreaming that it would chiefly rest upon 'Our Village,' which for pure English, unaffected naturalness, and innocent poetic charm, has never been matched. It would be impossible to give the least idea of the

manner in which she intoned the verses she read—blank verse indeed, but interspersed with lyric poetry; the sing-song of it can hardly be imagined, but to childlike ears that was half the battle, and gave a tunefulness to the performance which we no doubt believed to be the fitting language of exalted personages; commonplace diction for crowned heads, heroes, and heroines would be manifestly incongruous.

To think of it!

Strawberries and cream and a glimpse of Finden's Tableaux, of which all I can recollect was a group of Hindoo girls floating their lamps upon the Ganges in illustration of one of Elizabeth Barrett's earlier poems, and then we were sent away to make room for the crowd of visitors by whom morning and evening during the summer months she was *befraddled* (her own word), making her cottage, as she said, a sort of tea garden or rural Beulah Spa.

We returned home laden with treasures, books, flowers, poetic dreams! Nor had we the most remote idea that there was anything to compassionate in the comparison between the more than modest quarters we had left and our own roomy and comfortable house which should of right have been hers, but of which she had been deprived by the reckless extravagance of her father, to whom, in spite of all, she dedicated a life-long loyalty and devotion.

Grazeley Lodge had been built by Doctor Mitford with his daughter's lottery prize for twenty thousand pounds, on the site of an old picturesque mansion which he pulled down to make way for a new imposing structure he called Bertram House, to indicate his connection with the Mitfords of Bertram Castle, Northumberland.

Well furnished, lavishly decorated, full of fine pictures and works of art, in a few years nothing remained of it all but bare walls and a Wedgwood dinner service. What the irreclaimable spendthrift managed to do with all the money from this and other sources that passed through his hands was never positively known, but gambling speculations were in all probability answerable for the terrible impoverishment to which they were reduced. According to his own view of the case he was always cheated, ill-used, and overreached, whilst the chief sufferers never complained.

Bertram House was sold to pay his debts. "What a pretty place it was, or, rather, how pretty I thought it!" she writes in 'Our Village.' "I suppose I should have thought any place so where I had spent eighteen happy years. But it was really pretty: a large heavy white house in the simplest style, surrounded by fine oaks and elms, and tall mossy plantations, shaded down into a beautiful lawn by wild overgrown shrubs, bowery acacias, sweetbriars, promontories of dogwood, Portugal laurels and bays, overhung with laburnums and bird-cherry. A long piece of water letting light into the picture, the whole enclosed in an old mossy park paling and terminating in a series of rich meadows richly planted—this is the exact description

of the home which three years ago it nearly broke my heart to leave."

My father, who had bought the place from its last owner, was a sailor, and, I must confess, had one prevailing object in his mind—to clear the decks—to bring to order wild and ragged shrubs and beautiful rebellious creepers. The colonnade was ravished of its honeysuckles and clematis, the laburnums were pruned, the lake filled up, the park paling set upright. The exile had most truly said that every new possessor had added to the curse of improvement.

It was to this lost paradise that Mary Mitford would return again and again, indulging the regrets habitually repressed in a long life of pecuniary struggle and self-sacrifice; a refuge after the daily task of composition so often falling to the lot of those who are not asked what work suits them best, but what will bring most grist to the mill.

Sometimes she would stay there at night, thereby quite unconsciously becoming a source of terror to the neighbourhood. Her everyday appearance, very far from disembodied, was at such times decidedly spectral, since, with her constant disregard to appearances, she would turn a white petticoat over her head as a protection from the evening chill.

It got about that a woman without a head had been seen wandering in the Grazeley lanes, and she even mentioned the apparition herself and wrote about it to several of her correspondents.

"They say a spirit haunts the place—a lady without a head. I cannot say that I have seen her, often as I have paced the lanes where she is supposed to walk at deep midnight to hear the nightingales and look at the glowworms."

It is almost impossible to give a just idea of Miss Mitford's personal appearance. It must always seem a mass of contradictions, and must altogether fail to explain the attractiveness so wholly independent of external advantages. Very short and square, she suffered from a slight curvature of the spine, which she made the more apparent by wearing a broad band behind, crossed under her shoulders. Her face, without beauty of line or colouring, won confidence at first sight by its sweet and tranquil expression. Her eyes, with an amused look which came and went, were very expressive; they seemed to catch hold of everything that was said with sympathetic responsiveness, for, by reason of her own singleness and candour, she accredited everybody with the best intentions and the most appropriate remarks. By what indescribable process of the inner mind its manifestations were accomplished it is impossible to say. Her vivacity and intelligence were unmistakably expressed before she uttered a single word of all the warm and kindly feelings which made her so beloved by her intimate friends and so popular with everybody. I have even heard her called beautiful; but I remember someone looking at a pretty picture of her as a little girl, remarking that no one could have supposed she would so soon

outgrow every trace of good looks. Certainly the portrait-painters of her later years failed to find any. Even Mr. Lucas, who had opportunities of frequently studying her, confessed to a failure. But, strange to say, there was but little sign of the daily and hourly strain and anxiety it was her lot to endure. Time treated her gently, and the placid way in which she took her arduous life no doubt contributed to her lasting youth. So long as she could enjoy her garden she was a happy woman, and even before she managed to realise her "bright vision of a donkey-cart" (such another shandhredan, such another donkey, such another ragged boy to drive, it would be hard to find) she was content, and far more than content. Her country walks are so graphically described in her short stories that the reader cannot help but enter into her enjoyment—can almost see the bright streams, the flowery meads, the swallows dipping in the water—hear the nightingales in the thickets—almost smell the primroses and white violets on the sunny bank.

Still there must have been some sad moments in her life—moments as she herself describes of unspeakable depression, when she would be forced to go out into the air and "try what that would do." Then, with a village child who was always a marvel of beauty and intelligence, and Dash, or his successor, who she would allow was more creditable in appearance if less agreeable in demeanour, she would go down to the brook and the quiet fields, to the bit of grassy and blossoming earth, with its green knolls and tufted bushes, its old pollards wreathed with ivy, and be comforted.

Many years after—I revisited my old home, but little changed, although still suffering from "the curse of improvements," and then the summer morning walk over the common was brought back to my mind, and the garden house, and the pyramid of geraniums, and Dash, and the kindly welcome from the sweet woman and charming writer whose unselfish life, full of cares, exertions, and vicissitudes, had long come to an end.

C. E. MEETKERKE.



IN MY GARDEN.

DOWN by the sea, where summer sunbeams fall
And moonbeams chase afar the midnight gloom,
There lies a garden, beautiful and small,
Where lilies bloom.

White lilies, dazzling in the summer heat ;
Their lovely perfume through the stilly air
Like incense rises ; and the common sweet
Is sweeter there.

Down by the sea, close by the moonlit shore,
Lies the fair garden wrapt in perfect peace ;
There silence reigns, and there for evermore
All discords cease.

There, in the lap of ancient, time-worn hills,
Where silver starlight gleams serene and fair,
The lilies blow unseen—their fragrance fills
The midnight air.

And round the lily garden yew-trees sleep,
Their guardian shadows making night of day ;
And, stretching out their long gaunt arms, they keep
The silent way.

Below, the surges beat upon the shore ;
Above, the lily garden still doth lie—
The clam'rous sea-gulls, wild with ocean's roar,
Pass silent by.

And summer breezes in the noonday glare
Blend, with the briny odours from the deep,
The perfume of the lilies fragrant there
Upon the steep.

The balmy air is like some nectar deep,
Or, as the charm of some delicious wine,
Steals o'er the sense, and lulls to dreamy sleep
And peace divine.

And men may come and go, may live and die,
And still the lilies blow the livelong day ;
And so they will, methinks, till sea and sky
Shall pass away.

J. M.

A FALSE CONFESSION.

BY G. S. GODKIN.

IT was quite accidentally, as it always is in such cases, that I discovered an interesting correspondence which might form the nucleus of a romance of modern Italian life; and herewith I offer it freely to any one of my *confrères* of the pen who may think fit to use it.

I had taken a flat in an old *palazzo* which belonged to a gentleman who had never lived there, he being a relative of the late owner, who had another residence. The furniture was antique, so also were the damask chair-covers, curtains, and *portières*; everything looked dingy and faded. But the rooms were lofty with frescoed ceilings. There were cupboards and closets and little balconies looking into neighbours' windows and on to courts, all of which suggested infinite possibilities of old-world romance.

What I am going to tell may seem strange, but it was not in the bookcase that stood in my little study; nor yet in the mysterious-looking cupboard in the thick wall; neither in the old *scrivania* with its drawers and pigeon-holes, that my find came to light. It was in a little dark lumber-room where broken furniture had been thrown that I came upon a waste-paper basket full of old journals, documents, tattered novels and letters, open and torn.

I was induced to examine the contents of the basket because I found on the top a book which turned out to be a rather early edition of Tasso's 'Gerusalemme Liberata,' much the worse for wear, which I put carefully in the bookcase.

Near the bottom of the basket I came upon a packet of papers tied with faded tricoloured ribbon. My interest was aroused; I untied the bundle and found it contained a note-book or diary and two separate packages of letters, each in a large blue envelope, like those used for manuscripts or law papers. One was labelled in a female hand, *Letters of Giorgio*, and the other in the same hand, *Letters of Santina*. The letters were more than twenty years old, but clear and well-preserved.

I carried all to my little study, which looked into a quiet court of the palace, and sorting the correspondence carefully I possessed myself of a fragment of a love story. Here is a translation from the Italian, without dates, which are not necessary to the interest. Enough to say that it was soon after the passing of the law which rendered civil marriages obligatory, leaving the church only the empty honour of performing the religious service, which might be dispensed with,

and would not be so remunerative as when priests alone had the power to unite in matrimony.

Before giving the first letter I should mention that the note-book, evidently that of a young lady, contained entries of everyday incidents, domestic and otherwise, with reflections and comments. In the latter part of it the name *Giorgio* frequently occurs; at first he is an object of keen interest, and latterly of rapturous affection. His opinions about things in general are sometimes quoted, his appearance alluded to as "his penetrating, keen, grey eyes looking out from under projecting brows." His age is mentioned as twenty-five; his character analysed as a man—cold, reserved, strong, but noble, generous, high principled, and very clever. In fact, the writer, it was plain, was deeply in love and felt a pleasure in writing about the object of her devotion in her own private diary. Here is the first letter:

Giorgio to Santina.

"DEAREST SANTINA,—I am perfectly willing to kneel at the altar with you and receive the priest's blessing on our union, which is quite natural for you to desire. I am a Liberal, but I do not want to break with time-honoured institutions; and above all, I do not wish to do violence to the sentiments or the conscience of my loved one. As I desire perfect tolerance for myself, so also would I give it to others. You, dear Santina, who have been bred in a convent, cannot be altogether emancipated from ecclesiastical influences—and indeed it is hardly desirable that you should be otherwise than what you are. Women cannot live without religion in a concrete form. They feel the need sometimes of a spiritual adviser. To this custom I make no objection, provided you are careful in the choice of the confessor to whom you give your confidence. Ask your father if I am not right in thus warning you to be sure that the priest's reputation be above suspicion.

"For myself I have long given up the practice of confessing and never mean to resume it. In my boyhood I derived from it more harm than good. I took an unconquerable prejudice against it since I became a man, and made a vow never again to confess. If the church will not have me without confession then I must go unblest. The marriage-tie is as firmly knit by a solemn pledge before the *Sindac* as when it was done before the priest. It makes us man and wife in the eyes of the law of our country. The priest's blessing adds nothing to the validity of the contract and can easily be dispensed with. Nothing he could say could make me think more seriously than I have done of the responsibilities I am about to assume. I trust my own sweet maid will see the matter from a reasonable point of view and make no difficulties where none exist. If I have treated this question of sentiment from the lawyer's cool practical point of view, it is because I think you need to have it so

presented to you. You know my heart is not all prose and that I am not insensible to the poetic side of life, and still less to the appeal of true religion.

"Adieu, dearest Santina. Your sweet face and graceful form are always before me. I picture you at this hour of the evening, guitar in hand, playing and singing for your father. Will you play and sing like that for me when I have the happiness of calling you *wife*? The time is brief till then. Adieu!

"GIORGIO."

Santina to Giorgio.

"DEAREST GIORGIO,—Your letter gave me mingled pain and pleasure. You did not mean to cause the pain, for you are all gentleness and goodness; but you did so unconsciously. I cannot hear without distress that my affianced regards with distrust and dislike the offices of our holy church. What if you did meet in your youth an unworthy priest? Some black sheep there are in every fold. It is not just to condemn all; and even if there were many unworthy members, the church itself would still stand spotless and infallible. Will you not, therefore, give another trial to the 'time-honoured institutions,' before wrenching yourself from them forever? Think about this, my beloved Giorgio, for my peace of mind depends on it. In a fortnight our marriage is to take place, and the religious ceremony will not be granted by the curate unless both the spouses have confessed beforehand, for marriage is a sacrament. You will do it at least this once for my sake, dearest? You will have pity on your poor Santina, who awaits with trembling anxiety your reply. What possible harm can it do you to bow your pride before a priest and confess yourself the sinner which you know you are, and which you do confess every time you kneel before God?

"Your loving

"SANTINA."

Giorgio to Santina.

"It grieves me deeply, my beloved, to reply in a contrary sense to your expectations. But I have made up my mind long ago on this subject. In fact, I made a vow that I would never kneel before any man again. I hold by that resolution, which was dictated by reason. The various causes which contributed to make it I need not trouble you with, my dearest; but they were sufficient for myself. I should not be worthy of your esteem and confidence if I were so easily turned from a fixed purpose. As I have said, if this be a *sine quâ non* of the church service, I must go unblest.

"Pray take this answer as final. You are a dear little saint, as your name implies, but you must be content to pray for us sinners.

I do not impose my thorns on you, and I cannot allow you to impose yours on me. I am a man of my word, and some day you will be glad that I am so.

"Your devoted
"GIORGIO."

Santina to Giorgio.

"DEAREST,—After a week of anxiety and sorrow which your stern unbending character has imposed on me, I have won the good padre's consent to perform the religious service without your confession. You said you would willingly come to church on those conditions, so I hope you are content. But, oh, Giorgio, what I have suffered! In these last days, too, when I have so many things to think of, preparing my trousseau, and dressmakers are always behind time, and *never* keep their promises, as all the world knows. I doubt if I can be ready on the 20th, but I am doing my utmost. I feel exhausted with all this worry about the ceremony. Ah, dearest Giorgio, what would I not give to see you a good Catholic! I pray that some day your prejudices may be dissipated and you may see that worldly matters and religion are not to be judged by the same standard. Notwithstanding your obstinacy,

"I am yours, entirely yours, and for always,
"SANTINA."

Giorgio to Santina.

"Thanks, my dearest love, for your last. I can forgive your reproaches as to 'my obstinacy,' for time will tell if I am not right. At present I am content with the assurance of your love. With mutual affection and confidence we cannot be otherwise than happy, and we shall grow to understand each other better every year. I am looking forward with impatience to the day and the hour that I may call you mine and see you installed in my home. My love has grown gradually since the first evening I met you. I think of you often, as I then saw you, bending your graceful head with its rich black tresses over the guitar, your lovely bare arm glancing in the light as you touched the chords, your sweet voice sending forth a melody that thrilled me. That was the moment of your conquest. My fate was clear before me from that evening, though I waited for months before speaking; and you grew dearer to me every day till I felt I could not live without you.

"You must be ready on the 20th, and you may expect me on the 17th.

"Yours,
"GIORGIO."

Santina's Reflections in her Diary, dated the 20th.

"Let me try to compose my mind to think and review the circumstances. To think calmly is almost impossible. I am still so stunned by the terrible blow that I am hardly capable of the act of thinking. One thing is certain; I am married—married by Civil Law, and married in the Church. That is done. The day so longed for and yet almost dreaded has come; I have had the blessing of the Church which I schemed for, without which, I was told, no marriage could prosper. This day, which should have been the high-water mark of my happy youth, has come, and is not yet gone. It is only eight o'clock in the evening, and instead of being in the villa with my husband by my side, I am sitting in my chamber in my father's house, shivering, not so much with external cold as with the deadly chill at my heart.

"I am a wife, but an abandoned wife; left almost at the church door, as if I had committed some unpardonable sin—to be the object of contumely or pity—left by the bridegroom who had just vowed to me a life-long devotion.

"What have I done to deserve so cruel a fate? I have not been false to him in thought or word. Such a trifling deception, with the best of motives, another man less stern and hard would easily forgive; but Giorgio is made of adamant. And it has been my fate to love him to distraction, and I must love him to the end.

"What have I done? I have sinned, yes—I can see that plainly; but was it such a monstrous offence? I have been educated in a convent, and have been taught, above all things, reverence, for the church, its ministers, and all its appointed functions. I was told that no marriage could prosper without the blessing of the church. Giorgio would not confess, and so I persuaded my brother Marco to go in the name of my bridegroom to confess and get the necessary certificate to present to the *curate*. It all would have gone well only that stupid old padre, after I had enjoined him not to allude to the confession, when he was saying good-bye to Giorgio, while I was changing my dress for the homeward journey, whispered his approbation of what he had done.

"I am glad, my son, you have prepared for this solemn act by confession."

"But I have not confessed, father."

"Both the priest and the layman were furious.

"Giorgio knocked at my door as I was about to come forth in my prettiest gown and hat. The carriage was at the door.

"I am quite ready," I said, with a smile. But the smile died on my face and my heart stood still when I met his eye. It was not

the flashing anger of my father's black eyes—an anger which soon subsides. Indeed, it was not anger at all that was expressed in those clear grey eyes, so cool and penetrating in their general aspect, and, on occasions, so full of tenderness. It was stern, cold disapproval and sorrow. He came inside my room, closed the door, told me to sit down; he had something serious to say. He remained standing while he said it. As I sank into a chair, I instinctively took off my hat and threw it on the table. It was like a judge delivering sentence that he spoke; in a low calm voice, but struggling with suppressed emotion, he told me my fate. He considered that I was such a slave of the priests that they had power to obscure my moral sense—to jumble up religion and falsehood. Pious frauds, he knew, were practised by some of the clergy, but he did not think his bride, from whom he expected absolute confidence, would signalise her marriage-day, and the very act of marriage—which *he* held sacred—by a gross deception. He had refused to mock a ceremony in which he did not believe, but I had not scrupled to embroil my brother in an odious trick on the priest and on my husband. When he paused, I spoke with difficulty.

"I see I have done wrong, Giorgio. I am sorry, very sorry. Forgive me, dear Giorgio!" I pleaded imploringly. 'Do not be hard on me. I acted for the best—for your good and mine.'

"My good!" he cried, with a sudden flash of fierce anger. 'What perverted notions have you of good or evil? I might have known all this. Many men have told me of the mischief wrought in families by the teaching of the priests. But I wanted to be just and tolerant, and not to join in the cry against the clergy now they are down. But this is too much. You are my wife, unhappily, and you may bear my name; but I cannot take a deceitful woman to my home and my heart. I shall make you an allowance and you can live under your father's protection. You are very young, and years may give you a right judgment. If you wish to cultivate true piety, go to the fountain-head of your religion. Read the Evangelists, and see how truth, simplicity, and guilelessness are praised; how falsehood, pretence and hypocrisy are denounced.'

"My head was bowed between my hands, while my tears flowed down in a flood on my lap. I could not speak.

"It is useless to weep, Santina. Tears cannot obliterate the shameful lie by which the priest was cozened into giving me his blessing. He might as well have cursed me.'

"Giorgio," I cried sobbing, 'pardon, pardon, this once! For Heaven's sake, have pity!' I caught hold of his arm with both hands and held him tightly while I pleaded passionately for mercy.

"I am a poor motherless girl, who have had no other teachers but the nuns. I was told that the blessing of the church would be fruitful in blessings for you if you could be got to conform. God knows that I erred with a good motive, and that any other sort of

deception would be abhorrent to me. I love you, Giorgio; I love you! Does my love count for nothing?’

“I felt his arm trembling in my grasp, and I knew he was shaken to the centre of his soul. But he did not yield. He loosened my clasp and freed himself from me, and stepped to the door, as he said:

“‘Poor child! You have been badly taught indeed. I pity you. But you are not fit to be the wife of an honest man—you would compromise me. That is a hard saying, but I cannot deceive you as to my intentions. We must live apart. If, however, you ever need a protector—which you will not while your father lives—you can write to me. Adieu!’

“He pressed my hand tightly, then put a kiss upon it, and departed.

“As he closed the door, the pent-up anguish of my heart went out in a bitter cry, and I fell into a fit of sobbing, which lasted long, and left me almost stupid. I feel still so crushed by my strange misfortune that I can hardly believe it. My father, who was very angry with me and Marco, has tried in vain to persuade Giorgio to keep up appearances and take me away. But he said he would have no more shams.

“I think sometimes this is all a horrid dream, and I may wake to the happy state of an expectant bride. But then I look at my white silk dress spread out on the bed, with the bridal veil on the pillows where the maid laid it when I took it off. It seems like my dead self lying there awaiting burial. I look at my hand with the wedding-ring, and I am convinced that I am a married woman—a married woman without a husband—the most unhappy being in the world. I may bear his name; I am the Signora Castruccio. But what care I for a name? I want *him*! Oh, Giorgio, my beloved! My brave, noble, gifted husband! I was so proud to belong to him. I belong to him no longer. He has cast me off as unworthy—me whom he delighted to praise and please! He had the villa beautifully decorated for me, and at this hour he is walking about through the house mourning my absence. I should have been by his side, leaning on his arm while he showed me all the pretty objects he had got for me, every word and look of his breathing love. And I am here alone, alone, alone!”

Santina's Diary.

“Villa Castagne.

“A month has passed since that never-to-be-forgotten unhappy wedding-day, and I am still the most miserable girl alive. My father remonstrated with Giorgio that afternoon and subsequently, but without effect. I begged papa to take me out of Florence, for I dreaded the pity of my friends; and he, good kind man, though justly displeased by what I had done, acceded to my wish. We

went in a steamer all round the southern coast of Italy, landing occasionally to visit interesting or beautiful spots. But it did not succeed in distracting my mind. It was impossible for me to enjoy anything. I tried to be interested, but my father saw through the pretence, and I could not conceal from him that my health had become affected by the constant trouble of mind; my strength was gradually sinking. Then he brought me home to our little mountain farm, and I have been more content since I arrived here. It is lonely, and at this time of year cold and bleak; but I am out of sight of the world, with my nurse and her husband, papa's steward, both of whom know my sad story.

"Dear papa pretends to be occupied with the *aristodini* and the putting in of crops, but I know he is sacrificed for me. He has brought me a box of books, and recommended me to study and occupy myself with serious reading. To please him I read what he tells me and talk with him in the evening about it. He has brought up my guitar also, but when I attempted to sing one of my old songs the memories it called up overcame me and I burst into tears. He took it out of my hand and laid his hand on my head. He did not speak a word, but I felt his sympathy. The strange thing is that he does not condemn Giorgio's conduct. He was very angry with Marco, who made the confession from pure levity because he had been dared to do it by a companion, and he blamed him more than me. But he has shown me my fault very plainly too, and I see how reprehensible my conduct was. God forgive me! I am severely punished.

"I often dream of my husband and that last interview. Yet he loved me, and the wrench was hard on him too. It is true what Dante says:

"Nessur maggior dolore
Che ricordar il tempo felice,
Nella miseria."

"It is painful indeed, yet I feel drawn irresistibly to think of those happy days of our engagement, and before it.

"The wives of our tenants here call me 'Signora Castruccio,' and ask when is my husband coming. I shall stay here for the next six months, and then perhaps I shall have braced myself to face the world as a deserted wife.

"The spring is opening, and this life among the chestnut woods and streams rushing down the rocky ravines, where I meet nobody but a little shepherd with his flock, or a peasant driving his oxen, suits me better than any other. In the lap of Nature we find something soothing when we are weary and sick of the world."

*Signor Corsini to Signor Castruccio.**"Villa Castagne.*

"DEAR GIORGIO,—I have not written to you since our last painful interview, not from any ill-feeling, but because I thought, under the circumstances, it was your place to write first. Now you have broken the silence and asked for news of your wife I shall give it you truly and without reserve, as if you were my own son.

"What you heard was true. My child has been broken in health. She was so poorly on the trip I took her to the South that I thought it best to bring her home—not to the city, but to my mountain farm, where my steward's wife, who nursed her, attended her with loving care. At first it was dismal; but she seemed more content, and now, after two months' residence in this bracing air, her health is very much improved, though she is decidedly thinner than formerly. The spring has come, and she feels the revivifying effects of it unconsciously. She takes an interest in the animals, likes to see the birds nesting and the young lambs playing. She teaches some of the little girls to sew, and she reads a good deal.

"Need I say that she is still profoundly melancholy. Imperfectly as a young man can understand the heart of a girl, you still understand it sufficiently to know that grief and humiliation bow down her naturally gay and buoyant spirit. 'Her own fault,' you will say. 'She brought it on herself.' Too true, alas! Our greatest griefs are of our own making. But as your favourite Shakespeare says, 'If we all had our deserts, which of us would escape whipping?'

"You know, Giorgio, how I view the transaction which divided you. But it was far worse in Marco than in his sister. My poor motherless Santina never left the convent for seven years, and girls are so subservient to their religious teachers that they hardly dare think for themselves before marriage. She had not been long enough at home to have an independent mind on serious subjects. She is, however, improving in this, and the books which I carefully choose for her will give her more breadth of judgment. It is, however, a delicate and difficult task to withdraw her confidence from her religious teaching without shaking the foundations of her faith, so necessary to the peace of the female mind. Her sadness makes me sad; but I dread the time when the reaction will come—when the natural instincts of youth will reassert themselves, and she may seek to forget her troubles in frivolous amusements. There is no sign of that yet; but in Florence she has friends who might induce her to go into society, and society in her circumstances is not desirable.

"In a word, I would say to you, my son, if, as you say, and I doubt not, you have still Santina's welfare at heart, do not put too severe a strain on her loyalty. She may grow indifferent to a husband who shows himself indifferent to her. Remember you have given her

no hope; she thinks you have a heart of adamant. Is it well to let that conviction crystallise?

"Your true friend and well-wisher,
"T. CORSINI."

Signor Giorgio Castruccio to Signor Corsini.

"Florence.

"A heart of adamant! My dear friend, it would have been well for me if I had. It is not my way to 'wear my heart upon my sleeve for daws to peck at,' and nobody knows what I have felt the last three months. Do you suppose that Santina was the sole sufferer in this affair, or that I was indifferent to her trouble? No, I am sure you do not, dear Signor Tomaso; you have shown yourself very considerate to me, and I thank you heartily for your kind frank letter, which is that of a true friend. I wish very much to see Santina, but do not wish her to be prepared for my coming. I also want to talk on business matters with you. May I pay you a short visit of a day or so at Villa Castagne—as a friend—nothing more?

"GIORGIO CASTRUCCIO."

Santina's Diary.

"Oh, what a shock, what a joyful surprise I have had this evening! It seems incredible, but it is true. As I sat on the verandah looking out at the woody mountains, I heard a step coming up the stairs from the garden, and a man appeared. It was my husband. I almost fainted at the sight of him, but he did not perceive it, because I was reclining on a long chair with a cushion behind my head and my feet on a low chair, as I had hurt my foot in the wood this morning. He came to my side quietly, took my hand and kissed it.

"Santina, I have come to see you. I heard you had not been well," he said.

"There is nothing the matter with me," I said, imitating his coolness, 'except a slight strain of my foot. Sit down, Giorgio. I am glad to see you, though you come as a stranger.'

"I come as a friend. I had business to settle with your father.'

"And have you seen papa?'

"Yes, I met him outside.'

"And he showed you to a room?'

"Your housekeeper, or nurse, did so.'

"(I saw he had made a toilette.)

"Your father is gone to his room and will be ready very soon. Tell me, Santina, how you find yourself; you are not really ailing?'

"Not at all; I am quite well. And you, Giorgio—how has the world used you since we met?'

"I was astonished at my own coolness and courage; but it was

only external. My heart was throbbing violently, and I felt my cheeks hot.

"'The world?' he replied. 'I have taken little count of the world since we parted. It is not the world has power to trouble. It is only our friends.'

"'Too true.' I took a look at his face and noticed that he had grown thin and haggard. 'It is too true; but we can escape both the world and our friends by taking refuge in a mountain solitude like this. Nobody troubles me here.'

"'But when you return to Florence you will see your friends?' he asked.

"'Yes; but when the first meeting is over it won't matter so much. I think it must be the dinner hour,' I added, and I put my feet to the ground and attempted to rise. He hastened to assist me.

"'Does your foot hurt you? Lean on me.' And he drew my arm through his.

"Thus we entered the dining-room, arm-in-arm like an attached couple, while we were in reality strangers. My father was there already, and the servant putting the soup on the table, so the conversation ceased to have any personal bearing. My father and Giorgio talked about public affairs, farming, and general topics. I took little part in the conversation, and after dinner I slipped out to my corner of the verandah where stood my chair and little work-table. At the other end of the *terrazzo* my father and husband sat at a little table sipping coffee and smoking. The sun had set some time behind the nearest mountain, and the moon was already up; the western sky was a mass of varied colours, now growing paler. I laid down my work, and leaped on the parapet of the *terrazzo* looking down on the stream, almost covered with young acacias, now sparkling with fire-flies. I had been suffering from suppressed excitement all the evening, my dignity requiring that I should deport myself calmly; but it needed a great effort. The fresh breeze that began to blow had a soothing effect on my disturbed nerves, and the occasional whiff of cigar-smoke from the far end of the *terrazzo* was rather pleasant than otherwise. What were they talking about—those two?

"After a little my father said he would go to look at his letters and papers; then Giorgio threw away the end of his cigar and joined me. I had a muslin dress on, and he asked if I would like a shawl. I answered 'No.' Then he leaned his arm on the wall and said:

"'This is a charming place at this time of year. Are you content to live here, Santina?'

"'In summer I love it; and I am as content here as I should be in any place.'

"'Are you happy?' he asked in a changed voice, as if some feeling were working in him.

"'Happy, Giorgio? That is a strange question,' I replied. 'Are you happy?'

"'Far from it.'

"'Then neither am I. I do not expect happiness—it is not for me—but I am learning to do without it. I hope I shall be able to support my widowed state with dignity and resignation. We had better avoid this topic. How have you left your aunt and uncle?'

"'Santina, I have come here on purpose to talk with you as well as your father. It is not that I wish to open an old sore, but that I am desirous of knowing—though, indeed, I have no right to ask—how you regard now, after three months' reflection, the episode of the false confession. I wish you would speak frankly to me as you would to your father.'

"My assumed calm was almost giving way. I trembled all over and leaned against the parapet. Then I spoke quietly.

"'Giorgio, you know how bitterly I have repented of that folly. I would give years of my life to have it obliterated. My sin is ever before me—I cannot forget it; and you cannot forget. You come here in the guise of a friend, and you remind me of it. Is that generous?'

"'It would be vile if I had not a reason for ascertaining your present views on the subject. I am satisfied that they coincide with mine, and I rejoice to hear it. There is now nothing to divide us.'

"'Giorgio!' I gasped.

"'Nothing unless you will, dear Santina,' he continued. 'Perhaps your affection has been too much tried and you no longer care. Do you love me still?'

"'Sempre—sempre!' I murmured. The tears rushed to my eyes and I put my hand in his. He passed his arm round my waist, and I hid my face upon his breast, shedding happy tears, and the memory of all the bitter ones I had wept was forgotten in the exquisite joy of that hour. He pressed me to his heart; his kisses fell in showers upon my brow, and he whispered:

"'Sposa mia, forgive me! I have been too hard.'

"In an hour after my father came out of the *salotto* and found us sitting there in the moonlight talking, my husband's arm round me. I ran to meet him, and he stooped and kissed me.

"'Your blessing, sir,' said Giorgio; 'this is our true wedding-day.'

"My father shook his hand warmly.

"'I wish you joy, and I pray that you may be happy. Perhaps this period of probation, so fraught with sorrow to us all, may not be without its uses to you young people. Come, Giorgio; I have a lot of business matters to settle with you. You must give me an hour in my room.'

"My father laid his hand affectionately on Giorgio's shoulder as they went away together, and I retired to my own room to think over the wonderful change in my life, and to record it here, with deep gratitude to God for the happiness which I thought was lost to me for ever."

A SHOOTING SONG.

THE early morn wears a grey soft mist,
And the lawn lies damp i' the dew;
But a dry wind's creeping up, I wist,
And the sun with a smile peeps through.
So up, friend, mind—leave dreams to the wind
To follow in search of the pheasant;
And do not be slow to confess as you go
Old Somnus has nought so pleasant!

There's a smell of frost in the cool crisp air,
And brown is the grass and the stubble,
Where a hare crept by with a timid eye—
Oh, how she will run and double!
Then up, friend, up—taste the foaming cup,
Then follow the hare and the pheasant,
And do not be slow to confess as you go
Old Somnus has nought so pleasant!

See—Tasso and Flirt are on the alert
To beat through the bush and the hollow;
'Twas the cry of a bird in the glade they heard,
And now they are anxious to follow!
So up, friend, mind—leave dreams to the wind
To follow in search of the pheasant,
And do not be slow to confess as you go
Old Somnus has nought so pleasant!

AGNES E. GLASE.



A WILD GHOST CHASE.

"WERE you not one of a court of inquiry in a ghost case, last year?"

"Don't mention it," replied young Leslie with an odd twinkle in his eye—"at least in my uncle's hearing. He paid the expenses, and though they were not heavy, still, being a rich man, he always likes to get his money's worth, and on this occasion he thinks he didn't."

Another day, when this aggrieved relation was out of earshot, I heard the whole story.

One morning, so ran Leslie's version, I received a letter from my uncle. It ran thus—

"DEAR CHARLEY,—I think I told you at Christmas I had contrived to let Gaunt Hall, the old place I bought in Yorkshire last year and got so cheap on account of its reputation as a haunted house. My tenants have just cleared out bag and baggage, a week after taking possession, and prefer to forfeit the rent rather than to return. This is awkward, as it will make the place more difficult to let than ever. I think the only thing to do is to have the matter thoroughly looked into. Somebody must spend a night in the room they call haunted and try to discover what is wrong with it. My gout won't let me stir from this at present, so I have decided to ask you, Bob Churley, and Mr. Duke Forsythe to go instead. Your aunt Emily, who knows Mr. Forsythe personally, is going to ask him, and says he will go anywhere on the chance of meeting a ghost. As to you and Bob, you shall have your reward when the shooting season comes. Could you be ready to start on Tuesday? Jenkins shall go down the day before to get things ready—everything except beds. You won't require *them*.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"CHESTER LESLIE."

I was at first very much astonished at the combination of Bob Churley, without, as I well know, a single idea in his head, and Mr. Duke Forsythe, as I presume, with any amount of them, considering the incomprehensible articles in the heavier monthlies with which his name in my mind is chiefly associated. On second thoughts, however, I admired the selection as adroitly calculated for various contingencies. If it were a ghost, who so well fitted to deal with it as an amateur of the species; if it were a burglar in disguise, no one would more cheerfully and efficiently grapple with him than Bob Churley?

On Monday, at the hour appointed, I was the first of the trio to arrive on the King's Cross platform, but I was presently joined there

by a pale dignified-looking person whom, from his portraits in illustrated papers, I was able to recognise as Duke Forsythe.

I introduced myself, and we took our places and arranged our things. I felt a little anxious as to how I should maintain conversation with so superior a being, and was relieved to find he was disposed to spare me that trouble by burying himself in the contents of a volume as far removed in appearance as possible from "the shilling shocker" I had provided.

As he did so, the train started, and only then did it occur to me to think of the third member of the commission.

"Bob Churley has missed the train!" I exclaimed aloud.

Mr. Duke Forsythe turned from his book towards me a gaze of polite inquiry; but, before I had time to explain, a kind of war-whoop resounded in our ears, and Bob Churley first vainly tried to open the door and then through the open window precipitated himself head foremost into the moving carriage, with less of a struggle than I should have expected from his admirable breadth of build. Nothing could have been more characteristic or, at any other time, less offensive to me; but just then, under Duke Forsythe's superciliously astonished stare, I wished that my old friend had made a less grotesque exhibition of himself.

Bob Churley was very far from being infected with these misgivings. His first speech when he had recovered his natural position as a human being, was to invite our congratulations on his having, to use his words, "hit it off so well," and that, too, in a voice that for the first time struck me as much louder than necessary, like his laugh, of which we heard a good deal, being as it was the expression not so much of amusement as of supreme satisfaction. One source of this, explained to us during a flow of disjointed chatter lasting for nearly an hour was that, on the plea of taking part in a scientific investigation, he had contrived to escape for at least twenty-four hours from his coach with whom he was reading, or supposed to be reading, for an examination he had already "muffed" three times. Compared with anything in the shape of brain-work, even a railway journey seemed to him delectable; still more an idle evening, and, as he hoped, with Jenkins to superintend an excellent dinner.

"And with our night's work before us," he concluded, directly addressing Mr. Duke Forsythe. "Before facing a ghost, you know, one is bound to have a good square meal—eh?"

When the shout of laughter with which he punctuated this remark was over, Mr. Forsythe replied with frosty severity:

"If you ask me I should say that, under the circumstances, the less one ate the better."

Altogether, I was not surprised at the tone of the criticisms I was presently called upon to hear, when at Holford Junction a change of trains with an interval of waiting enabled us to disperse ourselves for a little on the platform.

"Well, that is a glum beggar!" was Bob Churley's comment, delivered between two long draughts of whiskey and soda. "What the devil made your uncle handicap us with this old shell-back?"

Mr. Duke Forsythe's reflection, however differently presented, was in the same key.

"Excuse my saying so of your friend," he observed when, Bob being still in the refreshment room, we paced the platform together, "but I think Mr. Leslie has been unfortunate in his selection of Mr. Churley for an experiment of this nature."

I protested that no degree of affection for Bob could induce me to maintain that he was likely to be sensitive to spiritual phenomena.

"No, but what is of more consequence, he may repress them altogether. I don't know if you have gone much into this kind of thing? Ah, well, I have, and I believe few conditions in the investigation of occult phenomena are of so much consequence as atmosphere—mental atmosphere I mean. One irreverent or even inattentive mind may nullify the will power and concentration of a whole circle."

It was late in the cold spring afternoon when we reached the station nearest to Gaunt Hall. A drive of about an hour followed, mostly uphill, through a lonely stretch of moorland diversified by scaurs and boulders of iron-grey rock. We passed through the straggling village that gave its name to our destination, climbed a steep ascent, and at last drew up before a grim-looking house in a treeless and much neglected garden.

This dismal first impression was pleasantly relieved by the sight of Jenkins' familiar face, and by the aspect of the dining-room, whither he at once conducted us. The light of a cheerful fire was reflected in the silver and crystal ready laid for dinner; a dinner then in course of preparation, so he informed us, by a whole bevy of women allured from the village with heavy bribes, one to cook, and the rest, it would appear, to keep her company and the ghosts at bay. Before he showed us to our bedrooms, or more correctly dressing-rooms, he begged leave to introduce us to the haunted room before it grew dark, when, as he frankly explained, he could not be induced even to go near it for any consideration whatsoever. We followed him across an ill-lighted hall and up an oak staircase to this portentous chamber. It was a long room, lighted, at this late hour very imperfectly, by six windows, and scantily furnished as a sitting-room without any ornament except one picture, an old painting let into the panelling above the fireplace. To this, as the most conspicuous feature in the room, our eyes were immediately drawn. It was the portrait of a man, but so dark and faded that nothing except his face could be distinguished. Duke Forsythe at once inquired if it had any connection with the ghost story of the house, but Jenkins knew nothing about it and plainly did not wish to do so.

"It is a remarkable, a most remarkable face," cried Duke Forsythe solemnly. "Is it not?"

I said "yes," as I instinctively do to questions worded in this way, but I should have been puzzled if called upon to explain the statement I thus confirmed, for the face was so devoid of character or expression as to suggest, to me at least, absolutely nothing.

"Do you notice," continued Mr. Duke Forsythe, "the extreme melancholy of the eyes?"

I hesitated, but my silence was covered by Bob's exclamation.

"What you two fellows find so wonderful, I can't imagine. I can see nothing but a yellow smudge and two black spots. I say, Jenkins, at what o'clock are you going to give us dinner?"

It was served at eight precisely, and, thanks to the wines and other adjuncts that Jenkins had brought with him, was good enough to satisfy even Bob's high-wrought expectations. He did full justice to it; while, on the other hand, with a surprising accord of precept and practice, Mr. Duke Forsythe ate little and drank nothing. I observed a middle course between the two, and, as usually happens with trimmers, failed, I perceived, to earn the approval of either.

As we lingered over our dessert, Bob was interrupted in an uproarious and singularly ill-chosen story by the entrance of Jenkins about half-past nine, to inquire if there was anything he could do or provide for us before withdrawing with his feminine contingent to the village.

"I have put lamps in the—the room," he said, dropping his voice lugubriously, "and an oil-stove in the fire-place, as we cannot light the fire on account of the chimney smoking so."

"And whiskey and soda," cried Bob Churley, "don't forget that. Plenty of it, and big tumblers."

But here Mr. Duke Forsythe, who had hitherto suffered in silence, lifted up his voice in melancholy protest. He pointed out very justly that we had not travelled a hundred miles to a desolate and empty house in order to spend the nights in enjoyments—if they were such—that might easily have been procured at our chambers or our clubs. The end of our expedition was to seriously inquire into phenomena of a very delicate and evasive nature, and nothing was of more consequence in an experiment of this character than the frame of mind in which it was undertaken. Indifference would be unfavourable, and levity fatal. Strictly speaking, the attention of every one present should be fixed entirely and intently on the subject of investigation, but if that was impossible to some persons, they might at least abstain from hindering where they could not help by maintaining a quiet and respectful outward demeanour.

"In fact," he concluded, "we should behave as if we were attending a religious service."

"O Moses!" groaned Bob. Though a little startled myself by the speech and its climax, I felt the extremity of dismay thus displayed

by Bob was unseemly, and sided firmly against him with Mr. Forsythe.

So, yielding to this combined pressure, on condition the *séance* should not begin till midnight—thus leaving him three hours for his favourite refreshment—he consented to resign for the night alcohol and tobacco.

Leaving him to enjoy them alone till the hour appointed, we withdrew to our own rooms, Mr. Duke Forsythe bestowing on me before we parted sundry magazines and pamphlets dealing with psychical research and experience.

These, which I studied diligently in the quiet of my own room, presented to me an entirely novel aspect of this world, where I had always supposed a ghost was a *rara avis*. The very opposite impression was produced by the communications of innumerable persons who had all met, conversed with, and lived on intimate terms with such apparitions : insomuch that, after studying their testimony for some hours, it seemed much less incredible that I should see a spirit presently, than that I never should have seen one before.

In this highly appropriate frame of mind I joined my companions in the haunted chamber as the clock was striking twelve.

We grouped ourselves instinctively with our faces towards the fire, or rather towards the cheerless substitute for one that had been placed upon the hearth.

Bob Churley prepared himself for his vigil by selecting—in the absence of a sofa—the most comfortable chair he could find to sit on, with another before him to support his limbs. I contented myself with one seat in respectful imitation of Mr. Forsythe, though I fell short of his ascetic example by choosing one with a back and using it to support my own.

In the silence that, thanks to Bob's unwonted self-control, then followed, I endeavoured to compose and concentrate my thoughts by fixing my eyes on the oil-painting over the mantelpiece. In itself it was not very suggestive, being in the lamplight even more indistinct than when I last had looked at it ; but as the portrait in a haunted room it recalled many ghost stories old and new. In particular, it reminded me of a portrait about which the ghost of the original hovered, or rather stalked all night with clanking chains and heavy weights, until the portrait having been removed to a lumber room, he was seen and heard no more.

Now what, I began dreamily to speculate, could have been his motive for this behaviour? Was the portrait an unflattering one? I have seen photographic misrepresentations of myself I should be sorry indeed to transmit to posterity, but not even in this instance would I willingly sacrifice to my wounded vanity the nightly peace of a whole household. Certainly, take them all in all, ghosts were a strangely childish and——

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Here, there is no doubt, I must have dozed off, for it was afterwards that with a violent start, as if disturbed by an unexpected noise, I returned to consciousness of the haunted room. A mysterious sound was in my ears, an equally mysterious odour assailed my nostrils, and my eyes opened, as they had closed, on the portrait. Its aspect had entirely changed, and the appearance it presented is difficult to describe. The whole picture, frame as well as canvas, was vibrating; so too was the painting itself, the dark shades into which the figure merged being all in motion like the surface of liquid that is quickly stirred. At the same time, these intercrossing and intermingling currents gradually deepened until what had been a flat surface acquired a third dimension and I gazed not on, but into the picture and discovered a long perspective behind the figure, thus standing as on the threshold of a dimly lighted gallery.

I say the figure, for that as well as the face was now in strong relief against this sombre background—a man's form, tall and slight, clad in the cape and doublet of the Tudor costume, all in black, unrelieved save by the ruff at his neck. The face, too, was now distinct to me with an expression that Duke Forsythe had rightly called remarkable, but less correctly—melancholy. The fierceness of despair was what I read in these strange eyes that turned on me a gaze of repressed but indomitable ferocity, the fury of a wild beast that delays to spring only that he may spring the further and the surer in the end.

In either beast or man, however, this gaze should not have been so intimidating to a man of my age and strength. It might, it ought, by rousing the combative instinct, have exercised an exhilarating rather than depressing influence. The effect was as unaccountable as the incident itself. My heart thumped, my skin crept, my knees shook, while the power to move or cry deserted me under such a degree of abject terror as I had never imagined, far less experienced. The neighbourhood of my companions afforded no support, for I had wholly forgotten it and everything else in the horror that, like extreme physical anguish, overpowered and suspended all other sensations.

And yet worse was to follow. Slowly, so slowly that like the minute hand of the clock its advances could only be inferred not perceived, the phantom emerged from the picture and, at the same supernatural pace, advanced in my direction. I do not attempt to describe the feelings with which I watched its approach. As it drew nearer, the sound and scent I have already described became overwhelming. Sulphur fumes must be fragrant compared to the heart-sickening stench I then inhaled, while the sound, though essentially the opposite of music, was not without a certain weird rhythm, a horrible crescendo and decrescendo in its supernatural din. Together, in some inexplicable manner, they put the climax to my terror; it seemed to pass into dementia; I threw up my arms in a kind of convulsion—and awoke!

I was still in the haunted room, but it was now filled with the grim light of early dawn, and the picture was as vague and, above all, as motionless, as it had ever been. All that remained of my dream was the smell—which I still pronounce infernal—diffused by the nearly extinguished oil-stove, and the sound, unmelodious enough, but not precisely unearthly, proceeding from the improvised couch where Bob Churley slept soundly and vociferously.

As my eyes turned from his recumbent head to Duke Forsythe's stern profile, wakeful as I had last seen it, but paler and more worn, the point of the whole position suddenly recurred to me and I eagerly exclaimed :

"Have you seen anything?"

He rose to his feet, but before he left the room, replied with a glance of icy contempt and indignation :

"Is it likely? Is it possible? With two such coadjutors, one on each side of me, both sleeping—and snoring—the whole night through!"



GUARDIAN ANGELS.

O'ER every pilgrim in this world of ours
God sets a sentinel,
Whose duty 'tis to guard in darker hours
'Gainst harm of every kind. And unseen Powers
Await the guardian's beck and call, until
The watchful author of all human ill
Foregoes his purpose fell.

These guardians chosen by the Love Divine
Are those who loved us here;
Who love us still, and hail with joy each sign
Of earthly woe averted. Then benign,
Those radiant beings who have found their bliss,
Press on our brows a sacred, unfelt kiss;
And sometimes drop a tear.

H. DE BURGH DALY.

